AMBIVALENT AND NOSTALGIC ATTITUDES
IN SELECTED GOTHIC NOVELS

by

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This dissertation focusses chiefly on the sensibility underlying selected gothic fiction published between 1764 and 1820. A preliminary section deals with the history of the term "gothic" from the Renaissance onwards, and in this section and elsewhere attention is given to the revival of interest in gothic architecture as affording insights for the critic of the novel. The general emphasis of the study is on attitudes to postulated gothic ancestors, and how a recreated gothic world provides either a suitable environment for discovering an ideal social or political system, or opportunities for exercising greater imaginative freedom, especially in the treatment of sensational or erotic subjects.

Political thinkers of the post-Renaissance seeking an "Ancient Constitution," as well as antiquaries indulging a taste for medieval artifacts, supplied a factual basis for the gothic, but its main attractiveness lay in its imaginative richness, novelty, and potency as a domain of art. In both literature and architecture, the vogue of the gothic was part of an innovative reaction against the apparent limits of harmonious, decorous, rational, balanced art. However, the innovation usually took a subversive direction, employing familiar forms and attitudes in order to conceal or palliate the strangeness of the gothic, in order to link it with more acceptable tastes. This dissertation traces the process of compromise with established styles in the literary and architectural work of the first prominent gothic fantasist, Horace Walpole, and contrasts his fictional techniques in The Castle of Otranto.
(1764) with those of Clara Reeve in *The Old English Baron* (1777), in which the gothic world is made an improved, purified version of Reeve's own society.

Two distinct attitudes towards the gothic developed: ambivalence and nostalgia. The ambivalent attitude retained much of the modern contempt for the gothic while realizing its sensational potentialities; it combined amusement with a deeper source of fascination. The nostalgic attitude regarded the gothic world as an experimental site, where conservative and radical solutions to present problems might be imposed upon a loose historical framework.

Ambivalent gothicism tended to follow an increasingly sensational line, investigating the attraction of evil and power, the plight of the victim, and the psychological accompaniments of extreme situations. An aesthetic basis of the art of strong sensation or terror is outlined through reviewing the central arguments of Burke's *Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). It is suggested that they helped to engender a controversy over the proper balance between sensationalism and decorum. The psychological theories of the *Enquiry* and the ensuing controversy are examined for the light they shed on gothic fictional practices, and critics' observations are cited as evidence of the tensions between ambivalent and nostalgic attitudes towards the gothic. Although exoticism served both gothic ambivalence and nostalgia, it was especially valuable for facilitating the approach to sensational materials, by providing a protective degree of aesthetic distance.
The ambivalent attitude and the careful exploitation of exoticism permitted freer exploration of painful, disturbing subjects than was possible in "realistic" fiction. This is documented through close analysis of *The Monk* (1795) by M. G. Lewis; *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and *The Italian* (1797) by Ann Radcliffe; and *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), by Charles Maturin. It is shown that, while nostalgic elements occasionally intrude in these novels, the usefulness of gothic exoticism lies in the increased ability to concentrate on certain obsessive themes. Psychologically-threatening problems of identity, knowledge, education, and authority often appear through monastic models, and the figure of the criminal or outcast, who is usually a sexual aggressor, indirectly represents anxieties about relations between parents and children, rulers and subjects, men and women. It is argued that the ambivalent gothic became a dark medium on which were projected visions of psychic disintegration and oppression. The novels analyzed sought to realize the extraordinary crises of the soul, while offering varying amounts of relief from the pressures of the anarchic forces portrayed in conflict.

Professor Ian S. Ross  
Supervisor
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL ANCESTORS: Revisions of the Past</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. VITALITY IN FICTION: The Mixed Mode</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. &quot;IMPENDING DANGERS, HIDDEN GUILT, Supernatural Visitings&quot;: The Sensational, the Exotic, and the Gothic</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. EROTIC DANGERS, MONASTIC TYRANNY, AND FAMILY SECRETS: Themes in the Ambivalent Gothic</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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CHAPTER I

CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL ANCESTORS

Revisions of the Past

Much of the appeal of the gothic novels began in a belief in the superior imaginative potency of another world, unfamiliar enough to be remote from the contemporary one. This basic belief often took on political, social, artistic, and architectural, as well as literary, forms. For that reason, we cannot regard it as an arbitrary, whimsical or disconnected phenomenon in the history of taste. In all areas, it involved a reworking of critical principles to accommodate a different range of experiences, so that the whole vocabulary of cultural values expanded. Critics threw down or took up models for emulation, and examined the means by which such choices were made. The result was a revision of the past, at least as the past entered and influenced the English imagination.

Terminological controversies over the gothic reflected the main features of that revision. Before turning to the actual emergence of the new gothic in fiction, we therefore need to pay attention to its background, and particularly to patterns of usage: the appearance of the word "gothic" in various contexts, the kinds of objects or qualities which it labelled, and the complicated, overlapping connotations which the word acquired. Such study of changing attitudes and practices will demonstrate the intermingling of motives for praise and blame, the
ambivalence towards an era and its imagined characteristics that pervaded gothic fiction. It will also show that opinions which seemed aesthetic, or which arose in aesthetic argument, carried political or social overtones as important as their overt meaning. The lines of partisanship, although hard to draw exactly, must be considered for a full interpretation of the novels.

There are several large compilations offering detailed accounts of the usage of gothic and the variety of opinions brought to bear upon the term.¹ In many of these, however, the literary gothic is treated secondarily. This is hardly surprising. Germann and Frankl, for example, write with the special viewpoint and purposes of the architectural historian, and although most of their observations are accurate, they do not go out of their way to address the problems of fiction. The application of their findings to the literary gothic will be the chief goal in the following discussion.

Terminological controversy over the gothic tended to fall into two phases. The first was a version of the ongoing dispute between the Ancients and the Moderns in which the putative barbarian creators of gothic art contrasted unfavourably, at first, with the Greeks and Romans. At the extreme of this phase, gothic came to be closely associated with barbarous.² The second phase, often containing the typical arguments of the first, concentrated upon the aesthetic qualities of gothic architecture and medieval (or Renaissance) literature, and their defensibility according to established or revised criteria. The first phase was more concerned with the creators, the second with their creations.
Both phases of the controversy originated with the art critics and historians of the Italian Renaissance. It is fairly clear why anti-gothic sentiment should have developed under those circumstances:

... until the fifteenth century the influence of antiquity was balanced by other influences, and no one thought of being a purist. Filippo Brunelleschi's researches into classical architecture ... heralded a hardening of attitudes. An absolute standard of artistic excellence, consciously based on the authority of Greek and Roman antiquity, was proclaimed in Italy. By this standard all the artistic monuments of the post-classical age, that is, all the works in the "modern" as opposed to the good antique style, were judged and condemned.

... it became apparent that the impure "modern" style must have been forced upon unwilling Italy by invaders, first by the notorious Goths and Lombards, who in the fourth and fifth centuries had squatted on the wreck of Roman civilization, and in later centuries by their successors, the Germans.

A typical and influential version of the Italian theory occurred in Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Painters*, where he conflated the Gothic and Germanic stories, and made the crucial identification of the gothic with the non-classical:

There are works of another sort that are called German, which differ greatly in ornament and proportion from the antique and the modern. Today they are not employed by distinguished architects but are avoided by them as monstrous and barbarous, since they ignore every familiar idea or order; which one can rather call confusion and disorder, for in their buildings, of which there are so many that they have contaminated the whole world, they made portals adorned with thin columns twisted in cork-screw fashion (vine tendrils) etc. . . .

After going on to describe these works in greater detail, building to a crescendo of disgust at their hideousness, Vasari proposed to explain their origin:

This manner was invented by the Goths, who, after the destruction of the ancient buildings and the dying out of architects because of the wars, afterwards built . . . edifices in this manner: those men fashioned the vaults
with pointed arches of quarter circles, and filled all Italy with these damnable buildings, so that their whole method has been given up, in order not to let any more be built.

Vasari took up this episode of mistaken building as an intrusion into the perfect practice of the "antique" Greek and Roman architects, and as a constant warning to the "modern" architects who, after Brunelleschi, were trying to recover that standard of excellence. His vituperation had its precedents. Filarete (Antonio Averlino) in his treatise on architecture written between 1460 and 1464 anticipated the connection between medieval architecture and the Goths or historical barbarians. Although he was a partisan of the ancient manner of building and of its recovery in full purity, Filarete's references to the gente barbarica still bears more of the historical sense of barbaric (pertaining to certain tribes), than of the literary sense barbarous (pertaining to a debased style). In the life of Brunelleschi attributed to Antonio Manetti appeared the theory of the bringing of German building methods into Italy. Historically erroneous, like Vasari's later effort, this version contained more detail and, therefore, seems more plausible.

De Beer has summarized the theory:

The Vandals, Goths, Lombards, Huns, and others, being themselves inexperienced in building technique, used German craftsmen who had skill in these matters, and buildings were erected all over Italy in the German manner. But when Charlemagne drove out the Lombards, and came to an understanding with the Roman pontiffs, he used workmen from Rome, who though not very experienced in practical building, worked in the manner of the Romans whose monuments they saw around them. ... Then Charlemagne's empire was overrun by the Germans who re-introduced the German manner of building which lasted until the times of Filippo Brunelleschi.

This account was more sophisticated than Vasari's, since it included German influences and allowed for a longer time-span; it did not make
medieval architecture the direct product of the Gothic tribes.

An epistle to Pope Leo X, written about 1518 or 1519 and attributed to Raphael or a member of his circle, also looked towards several of the points which would come up in Vasari's critique. The viewpoint in this case was Roman rather than Florentine, but the historical view was essentially the same: a sequence of degeneration and partial recovery of true artistic principles. Like Brunelleschi's biographer, this author differentiated between the earlier barbarians, the Goths, Vandals and Lombards, and the Germans:

... when Rome was overrun by the barbarians not only were the buildings destroyed but the art of architecture itself was lost. With their liberty the Romans lost all genius and art. They broke up the beautiful ancient buildings around them and from them constructed their wretched dwellings. There arose a most ignorant and worthless type of architecture, painting and sculpture ... later the Germans revived the art of architecture a little, but their ornaments "furono goffi, e lontanissimi dalla bella maniera de' Romani."

The author "contrasts the beautiful parts and proportions of a classical building with the irrational treatment, the strange animal figures and leaf ornaments of a 'German' edifice. Here criticism is combined with history. It is evident that the author dislikes the medieval styles; but when he opposes the 'Architettura Romana' and 'la Barbara' it is not to be assumed that he is being merely abusive; the second term is primarily historical, whatever other implications it may contain." But among those "other implications" was the ranking of cultures. "Barbara" cannot be merely an historical term (as de Beer claims) at a time when the works of classical antiquity were valued so highly, at a time when non-classical forms failed to satisfy the important artistic standards. For the whole convenience of the theory of barbarian origins for the
gothic, in Italy, lay in the fact that the barbarians were by definition outsiders, who did not have the moral and intellectual abilities necessary for civilization. Under the influence of artistic standards that propose a cycle of excellence and degeneration, the former associated with native, the latter with foreign, elements, it becomes hard to separate aesthetic from moral judgments, the alien tribes from the despoilers of culture.

None of the earlier statements reached the wide circulation of Vasari's *Lives*, or matched its influence. "No one before him had written with such sardonic asperity of medieval architecture, and in this respect . . . he set the tone for ensuing centuries. . . . Vasari was the first to make the definitive assertion that medieval architecture (and it is clear from his description that he was thinking of Gothic and not Romanesque architecture) was the invention of the Goths . . . this passage is without doubt the source from which subsequent writers were to derive the term 'Gothic' as applied to later medieval architecture."^10

The Italian theory set up an opposition which was not limited to architectural types. If the Goths and Germans had helped to spoil classical architecture, that was only because they had undermined the whole cultural and political order which produced it. Given the conscious revivalism and the sense of a lost national heritage that moved through Italian aesthetic thinking at this time, such scapegoating was quite predictable. The common idea of the Three Ages of Art, which we have already seen, in slight variations, in the Life of Brunelleschi and the Pseudo-Raphael letter, encouraged blame against the barbarians and intruders. For the Three Ages included the golden period of Greek and
Roman excellence, the period of decay under foreign influences, and the modern attempt to reach the original, ideal level again. Neutral historical or stylistic senses of gothic did not fit with an idea of history in which artistic modes were identified with political and social forces; in which order or civilization opposed anarchy or non-culture. As a result, gothic art must have seemed disorderly for two reasons: it did not share any of the accepted aesthetic qualities, and its supposed originators were the defilers of the classical heritage and the bringers of political chaos.

The notion of gothic disorderliness and irrationality posed a special problem for the modern disciples of Vitruvius. During the sixteenth century in Italy the term ordine came to replace Vitruvius' genere in describing classical columns: hence the "classic orders" of architecture. Ordine also occurred, with a great deal of confusion, as a synonym for maniera or opera. Usage indicates that there was a measure of equality for the "foreign" style, for the phrase ordine Tedesco appeared frequently. The nature of the buildings, however, made the phrase into a paradox, clearly illustrated in the definition of "Ordine Gottico" in Filippo Baldinucci's Vocabolario Toscano dell'arte del desegno (Florence: 1681):

... the working method in vogue under the Goths, the German manner and a kind of proportion which has nothing in common with the five good orders of Antique architecture; on the contrary, it is a completely barbaric fashion involving excessively slender, elongated, distorted and—in every sense of the word—enervated columns, imposed one on top of the other and cluttered with small tabernacles, pyramids, projections, disruptions, little consoles, crockets, animal carvings and tendrils, all one on top of the other, with no order, no rule, no proportion and no taste.
Gothic was unique in that it was an order without order. Vitruvians alternated in their response to it: some persisted in efforts to find a way of including it within the canon, a labour which continued through the eighteenth century; others were occupied with using the canon to condemn the gothic altogether. Since Vitruvian doctrines, as elaborated by Renaissance theorists and architects, also provided for stylistic conformity, particularly in restorations, a certain amount of gothic, or non-classical, work was justified. The key case, which generated great controversy, was the project to complete the Church of San Petronio in Bologna, for which designs were commissioned between 1521 and 1600. In the course of the dispute over the proper style Terribilia produced a version of the story of gothic intrusion in Italy which was in part dialectical, and which displayed the same concern for the lack of a definable order in the gothic:

... in this extremely confused state of affairs the Germans, or the Goths as some people like to call them, continued to a certain extent to imitate the things that they had seen in Rome, especially the Corinthian Order. They mixed Greek characteristics with their own and so, in their own way, created a third kind of architecture and introduced this into Italy; it is the kind found in San Petronio, one which ought really to be designated as unorganized rather than organized, although the followers of a certain Cesariano, a commentator on Vitruvius, claim to have discovered its principles in triangles. ... But since, to the best of my knowledge, we have no specific rules for the German order, we shall have to organize this German work within the framework of our natural and universal rules according to the guidelines laid down by Vitruvius.

By the eighteenth century the controversy over gothic continued in both its phases, touching the cultural deficiencies of its creators, whether believed to be Goths, Germans, Saracens, Saxons or Moors, and the outlandish qualities of their works. Much of the eighteenth-century
criticism was a throw-back to the Italian humanists' arguments, with an additional element coming from Boileau's principles of Good and Bad Taste. One passage which is interesting because it deals with literature along with architecture comes from the treatise on poetry and rhetoric by Johann Ulrich König (1727):

The so-called Nordic peoples then flooded the whole of Europe with their ignorance and with that Bad Taste which clung permanently to their descendants; this can still be recognized today from the remains, among other things, of their badly composed writings, rambling romances, immoderate passion for rhyming, clumsy monkish script, coarse-sounding speech, barbarous music, graceless costumes, badly-drawn paintings, and above all from their Gothic architecture.\textsuperscript{16}

Kant, in his Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime (1764), joined those who believed that all things which offended against Reason, Nature and Propriety were gothic, or similar to gothic. His history of artistic development resembled the Italian account, with reference to the Three Ages and a scheme which included general cultural values.

In his encyclopedia of the arts, the Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste (1771-74), which was widely known among German neo-classicists, J. G. Sulzer turned back to Boileau for his vocabulary. For Sulzer gothic was synonymous with Bad Taste and he applied it to works regardless of the exact generic, regional or historical category in which they belonged; gothic was a catch-all label of derogation. Sulzer also applied the term "to all nations which engage in cultural pursuits before their taste has been adequately formed. Thus Gothic comes to mean something very like parvenu, and one can talk of Gothic behaviour as well as Gothic art..."\textsuperscript{17} Sulzer even perpetuated the historical misconceptions of
Vasari, for he believed that the term gothic "originated in the clumsy imitations of ancient architecture perpetrated by the Goths who settled in Italy." He conceded that gothic works were "lacking not in essential qualities, nor even always in greatness and splendour, but in beauty, charm, and delicacy." The Goths had made a travesty of the mimetic process in art, having no clear idea of their subjects or their means of imitation. It was obvious to Sulzer why their works seemed so grotesque, and equally obvious that such grotesquery was inadvertent, the result of incompetence not design.

Sulzer also took a clue from Shaftesbury's theories of taste and personality in associating aesthetic with moral judgments. He emphasized the causal link between a people's art and their spiritual well-being. Since gothic art was defective in most important aesthetic areas, a taste for it did not bode well for a person's general mental balance, and such a taste multiplied meant that society itself had become debased. Although the objects of contempt changed, the German organicists, Pugin and Ruskin all followed a similar line of argument.

The two phases of the controversy over the gothic were easily mixed so that, where arguments from aesthetic principles failed, they could be turned with no great degree of subtlety into *ad hominem* arguments instead. Vasari had begun this strategy by moving away from a detailed, if mistaken, critique of gothic aesthetics, and towards the barbarous origins of the art and the barbarous character of its defenders. The usual eighteenth-century procedure was a little more sophisticated. For example, William Whitehead, writing in *The World* (No. 12, 1753), neatly associated a taste for the gothic with disturbing political and social events:
This, however odd it might seem, and however unworthy the name of Taste, was cultivated, was admired, and still has its professors in different parts of England. There is something in it, they say, congenial to our old Gothic constitution; I should rather think, to our modern idea of liberty, which allows everyone the privilege of playing the fool, and of making himself ridiculous in whatever way he pleases.18

In The Goths in England Kliger takes up the obverse side of Whitehead's accusation, and looks for the positive political uses of the word gothic. According to Kliger, "the term 'Gothic' came into extensive use in the seventeenth century as an epithet employed by the Parliamentary leaders to defend the prerogatives of Parliament against the pretensions of the King to absolute right to govern England." The search for precedents for this resistance stimulated a considerable antiquarian movement in England. The antiquarians of the Parliamentary party believed that the Goths, by whom they meant the ancestral Germanic peoples, had "founded the institutions of public assemblies which, in its [sic] English parliamentary form, the Stuarts were seeking to destroy." By careful reworking of the depictions of northern tribes by Tacitus, Jordanes and Saint Augustine, the political researchers manufactured the support they needed: "The analysis of Gothic character found in these early texts described the Goths as a Teutonic folk to whom political liberty was dear. Furthermore, the early texts offered a quasi-scientific explanation of the Gothic propensity for liberty in a theory of climatic influence on character . . . the frigid temperature of the Gothic habitat in the northern regions was the physiological factor explaining Gothic vigor, hardiness, and zeal for liberty."19 Mingled with this reconstruction was the doctrine of gothic moral and intellectual superiority, the "translatio imperii ad Teutonicos," which had been promulgated in the north since the Protestant Reformation,
and which connected the gothic with enlightenment, through an opposition of racial characteristics: "the triumph of Gothic humanity, honor, and simplicity over invertebrate Roman urbanism, effeminacy, and luxury. The Gothicists pictured . . . a world rejuvenation or rebirth due to the triumph of Gothic energy and moral purity over Roman torpor and depravity." Kliger is fairly cautious, however, about forming connections between political and aesthetic attitudes. Although he argues that the idealization of ancient Gothic liberty was essentially a whiggish exercise in creating historical precedents, he denies any firm link between political Whiggery and admiration for gothic architecture. Addison, who was a Whig, disapproved strongly of gothic architecture, while Horace Walpole, also a Whig, moved through avid approval, lesser enthusiasm, and occasional disapproval during his long career as connoisseur. Kliger also has to admit that the favourable, ethnic connotation of gothic did not overcome the unfavourable ones in practice, and that the favourable sense was not "the main or even important cause of the actual building of Gothic structures." But he does go so far as to claim that "an association had been formed in some eighteenth-century minds between Whig principles of popular government and the freedom from neo-classical restraints displayed in the Gothic building; per contra, from the opposing Tory point of view, the symmetry and balance of the Grecian building apotheosized the Tory aim of maintaining national stability through vested aristocratic interest and a strong monarchy." Lovejoy suggests a quite different use of gothic, as a slur: It performed much the same necessary function that, in certain circles, the adjective "Victorian" performs today. . . . The term also took on a certain political coloring; since it
not only vaguely suggested "the old-fashioned" in general, but, more specifically, the political and social system of the Middle Ages, i.e., feudalism, it sometimes served the progressives of the period as an unpleasant way of referring to anything the Tories approved. . . .

Unlike Kliger, Lovejoy proposes that the Whigs applied the label gothic not to themselves or to the ancestral supporters of their parliamentary cause, but to the Tory establishment, whenever they wanted to set forth its regressive tendencies or to raise the spectre of tyranny restored.

These partisan uses of the gothic seem contradictory only because they were part of the larger contradictions that had arisen in attitudes towards ancestors and towards the value in aesthetic argument of various kinds of traditional authority. There were Goths of the left and right, self-proclaimed Goths and ridiculed Goths because the values of the medieval and classical heritages were fluctuating. The conflict between the two main cultural dispensations was the central fact behind the emergence of a new gothicism. Kliger presents the opposition in terms of familiar polarities, nature and reason, but it is plain from the evidence of his examples that a case could be made for both properties belonging to both traditions. Lovejoy concentrates instead on a succession of "returns to Nature," each of which represents a reaction against some previous formulation of what constitutes the "natural" in art. The reaction to the gothic or to any of the other new tastes, such as the taste for the rococo, the Chinese, or the Egyptian, with which the gothic often was associated depended on the aesthetic qualities they were thought to embody and on the current limits of the notion of creativity.

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century uses of the word gothic were various and undiscriminating; consequently, any attempt to determine what
kinds of objects were considered gothic must aim to be exhaustive rather than definitive. Aside from the multiplicity of political and social purposes which gothic could advance, a factor which contributed to this diversity was the variety of theories for the "invention" of the medieval styles.

In trying to sort out the meaning of the gothic, Lovejoy has noted three common patterns of usage. In the first, any structure which did not satisfy neo-classical norms was called gothic. Thus, we have the statement in Dryden's translation of Dufresnoy (1693): "All that is not in the ancient gust is called a barbarous or Gothic manner." Similarly, Batty Langley, in Ancient Architecture Restored and Improved, etc. (1742), asserted that: "Every ancient building which is not in the Grecian mode is called a Gothic building."23

The second pattern of usage was more limited but equally inaccurate. This was the application of the label gothic to works which would now be called Romanesque. It is significant that Romanesque was the style that was actually believed, in Italy at least, to be of Gothic origin; the later "pointed" style was more likely to be thought German or Saracenic.

The third pattern was exemplified in John Evelyn's Account of Architects and Architecture which was prefixed to his edition of Fréart's A Parallel of the Ancient Architecture with the Modern (1697). Evelyn adhered to the recent theory of the double genesis of "modern" architecture, regarding the Goths and Vandals, and the Moors and Arabs, as originators of what he called "a certain fantastical and licentious Manner of Building." He lumped together and thoroughly confused the Romanesque or Norman "heavy" style with the later pointed style which
Wren would call Saracenic (that label also expressing a theory of "invention"). Early and late medieval buildings, buildings overly heavy, ponderous, gloomy and overly light; frivolous, airy were condemned under the same rubric and given the same designation, gothic. For Evelyn and his contemporaries, gothic referred to all architectural excesses. It did not matter much if those excesses resulted from diametrically opposite causes.

Failure to discriminate carefully among styles was understandably common with critics of the gothic. Since they saw the gothic as merely one among several subversive new tastes they were unlikely to look into its finer divisions. Moreover, ignorance of an ignorant style was a form of protection against its effects. So gothic was placed with rococo, Chinese and Egyptian as an aberrant species, and the same objections often were laid against all. This muddling of types was also encouraged by the modern supporters and builders of non-classical architecture, who felt no reluctance in introducing a mixture of elements into their designs, producing strange, and not especially vigorous, hybrids.

The critics' main target was the Saracenic or modern gothic of the thirteenth to fifteenth century. Their singling out of the Saracenic may have begun in "a valid aesthetic reaction against the excesses of the English Late Perpendicular and the French Flamboyant styles; but the attributes found in an extreme form in these were commonly ascribed to 'modern Gothic' as a whole." Among those attributes were lack of formal explicitness or rationality, and over-ornamentation, especially where there was no functional or structural need. The standards for judging such deficiencies were sometimes translated into magnitude and
immediacy of impression. For example, in Spectator No. 415, one of the series on "The Pleasures of the Imagination," Addison contrasted the effects of a classical and a gothic building upon the beholder:

Let any one reflect on the Disposition of Mind he finds in himself, at his first Entrance into the Pantheon at Rome, and how his Imagination is filled with something Great and Amazing; and, at the same time, consider how little, in proportion, he is affected with the Inside of a Gothick Cathedral, tho' it be five times larger than the other; which can arise from nothing else, but the Greatness of Manner in the one, and the Meanness in the other.

Addison borrowed a psychological explanation of this contrast from Fréart's Parallel, which made it clear that "Meanness of Manner" resulted from the distraction caused by superfluous, trivial details:

I am observing . . . a thing which, in my Opinion, is very curious, whence it proceeds, that in the same quantity of Superficies, the one Manner seems great and magnificent, and the other poor and trifling; the Reason is fine and uncommon . . . to introduce into Architecture this Grandeur of Manner, we ought so to proceed, that the Division of the Principal Members of the Order may consist but of few Parts, that they be all great and of a bold and ample Relievo, and Swelling; and that the Eye, beholding nothing little and mean, the Imagination may be more vigorously touched and affected with the Work that stands before it . . . if we see none of that ordinary Confusion which is the Result of those little cavities, Quarter Rounds of the Astragal, and I know not how many other intermingled Particulars, which produce no effect in great and massy Works, and which very unprofitably take up Place to the prejudice of the Principal Member, it is most certain that this Manner will appear Solemn and Great; as on the contrary, that will have but a poor and mean Effect, where there is a Redundancy of those smaller Ornaments, which divide and scatter the Angles of the Sight into such a Multitude of Rays, so pressed together that the whole will appear but a Confusion.28

When we penetrate this pseudo-psychological language we see that Addison was describing the failure of the gothic to concentrate its effects. The combination of variety and disorder produced what Montesquieu called "a sort of enigma."29 Addison found such obscurity a
barrier to strong impressions.

Addison brought this observation to bear on literary matters as well. In *Spectator* No. 62 he had proposed three categories of wit (poetical composition): true, false, and "mixt." True Wit, consisting in "the Resemblance of Ideas," was superior because it manipulated the simple elements of nature and avoided the trivial, the accidental and the superficial; therefore, it came closer to serving the mimetic purpose of poetry. In contrast, under False Wit Addison grouped all sorts of idle word-play, including puns, anagrams, acrostics, puzzles, figure-poems, riddles, and doggerel rhyme. Mixt Wit, partaking of both kinds, gave Addison occasion to attack the unrestrained working of fancy in poetry and, in particular, the legacy of excess and whimsical imagination left by the Metaphysical poets.

It becomes plain, as Addison's argument fills out, that by True Wit he meant to encompass the essential properties of good poetry. Comparing the degrees of poetic sophistication, Addison made use of a suggestive architectural analogy:

This is that natural Way of Writing, that beautiful Simplicity, which we so much admire in the Compositions of the Ancients; and which no Body deviates from, but those who want Strength of Genius to make a Thought shine in its own natural Beauties. Poets who want this strength of Genius to give that Majestick Simplicity to Nature, which we so much admire in the Works of the Ancients, are forced to hunt after foreign Ornaments, and not to let any Piece of Wit of what kind soever escape them. I look upon these Writers as Goths in poetry, who, like those in Architecture, not being able to come up to the beautiful Simplicity of the old Greeks and Romans, have endeavoured to supply its place with all the Extravagances of an irregular Fancy . . . the Taste of most of our English Poets, as well as Readers, is extremely Gothick.

Addison's comparison contained typical anti-gothic complaints. With
his emphasis on "Simplicity" and "natural Beauties," he pointed out that the gothic not only failed to concentrate its effects but also failed to conform to nature. These shortcomings were closely connected. The lack of formal or technical discipline in either gothic buildings or gothic poetry was a sign of their creators' carelessness and ignorance: Goths were those who would not recognize that imitation of nature was the proper end of art, or who could not achieve such imitation. Mechanically, rather than essentially, related elements were the materials for Addison's False and Mixt Wit; the patterns of nature, definable by universally valid rules, were replaced in this inferior sort of writing by the accidental quirks of language.

Simplicity referred not only to the obviousness or truth-to-nature of a building or poem but also to the means of its creation, and the remaining, visible signs of its creation. In Addison's critical vocabulary, gothic came to mean something like artificial or contrived. The hallmark of art was supposed to be its apparent effortlessness of execution, its blending of facility with genius. In contrast, the elaborateness of the gothic, whether in a "Saracenic" abbey or a vapid poetic conceit, indicated laboriousness, a striving after the spectacular, the unusual, when the natural could not be achieved. The gothic was unacceptable in art because it called forth unbridled energies in the artist, and required them from the beholder, wasting them in unnecessary exercises and fancies. In architecture, gothic continued to designate all types of non-classical buildings, from Saxon to Tudor, as various schemes for classifying them were tried out; Addison's literary usage, however, was an example of a general sense of the term gothic which was neither
historical (i.e., gothic means medieval) nor generic (i.e., gothic means romantic). In this sense, gothic stood as a catch-all term for the undisciplined, ignorant, formally extravagant art which obtruded upon the modern taste.

Another common source of objection to the gothic was its apparent lack of symmetry. And again there were literary analogues of the architectural defect. Like over-ornamentation or superficiality, this shortcoming was believed to originate in a failure of mimesis. Nature was inherently symmetrical as well as simple and distinct. Symmetry, however, had more to do with unity of total effect than with bilateral duplication. The artist's objective was to ensure immediate understanding of his work, and this required consistency in the relations of components and in their composition as a whole. "The demand for symmetry in architecture . . . expressed the same fundamental psychological theory as the insistence upon the unities in the drama and the disapproval of the mixture of genres. Bilateral repetition . . . was merely one of the principal means of producing this singleness of effect. . . ."31 Since tediousness and obscurity were negative qualities in art (until Sterne and Burke, respectively), it was proper for the artist to remove distractions which might interfere with an almost automatic recognition of significant form.

An issue closely related to gothic asymmetry was regularity, observance of the laws of mathematical proportion. If symmetry was a recognizable aesthetic quality, regularity was the basis for that quality in geometry (or, in the case of poetry, in technical rules). That a building was regular meant that it accorded with the "uniform and exact
mathematical rules of proportion, such as had been laid down by Vitruvius. Concern for mathematically demonstrable regularity had grown for several reasons: the need to provide practical guidance in construction to builders who were not engineers, the need to give theoretical justification for the elaborate neo-Vitruvian scheme of architectural "characters," the need to reduce human artifice and natural object alike to first principles—which were assumed to be mathematical. Since the Vitruvian term *ordine* had been interpreted as a qualitative, as well as generic, measure which could be used to deprecate the gothic as an "order without order," it was natural that any mathematical demonstration would prove the essential inferiority of gothic design and proportion; until the middle of the eighteenth century, there was no separate standard of *gothic* mathematical proportion.

Ignorance of the history of medieval building and its techniques encouraged the belief that the gothic was irregular and asymmetrical. Modern critics who had made no active study of such projects did not realize that both regularity and symmetry were important considerations in the drawing of the original plans for cathedrals, churches, abbeys, and manor-houses. They did not suspect that most of the features that they cited in their accusations against the gothic were, in fact, the result of accidents and the gradual way in which the building had taken place; they were not identifying, as they often thought, the outlandish characteristics of some medieval system of aesthetics. Since the earliest medieval monuments still standing in England in the eighteenth century were the products of centuries of sporadic work, destruction of partly finished sections, and natural decay, it was hardly possible to
speak of "the architect" of any such project. It was likely that original intentions would have been ignored by succeeding generations of builders, that the first conception would have been muddled.

In order to take historical factors into account eighteenth-century critics needed access to medieval building records, plans, proposals and lists. Especially in England, however, where the dissolution of the monasteries and other religious institutions had dispersed their collections and libraries, those materials were not readily available. But it is doubtful whether many critics would have felt any differently toward the gothic even if they had been able to look into such documents, and had been moved to do so. They still could have attacked gothic art for its haphazard execution and casual composition—for the results if not the intentions. It was an inescapable aesthetic observation: in its effects, the gothic lacked symmetry and regularity. The antiquaries provided historical evidence which did not fit comfortably with neoclassical assumptions—and not all antiquaries' tastes were changed by the evidence.

Other reasons for dislike of the gothic included "a physical distaste for the angular and pointed. . . . The spikiness of Gothic--the infinite repetition of the pointed form in spikes, turrets, pinnacles, arches, doors, and windows--made the eighteenth-century observer feel positively uncomfortable." One such observer was Goethe, who spoke of expecting Strasbourg Munster, which inspired his phase of admiration for the gothic, to appear as a "malformed bristly monster"; this sensitivity to gothic monstrosity was a typical, not an exaggerated, response.
Both Lovejoy and Robson-Scott also take note of the argument from universal acceptability, according to which the true test of the legitimacy of an artistic mode was its acceptance among civilized peoples. Since there were various ways of calculating the degree of acceptance, the argument was liable to be quite hard to pin down with particulars; it was adopted, if at all, without regard to the evidence of European architectural history—and recent history at that. Universal acceptability now may seem as if it should be a statistical notion, because we are more accustomed to looking for statistical universes; in the eighteenth century the concept defined a much more limited universe of believers in the classical rules, the established criteria of excellence. Universal acceptability was in fact a disguise for the process by which a cultural community selected and identified its members. The whole argument must have derived some of its force from the enduring belief in the Three Ages of Art: the opinions of the "barbarians" of the middle age were obviously much less important than the examples of the first, classical age and the aspirations of the latest age.

Lovejoy does not find that the argument was very influential as a way of attacking the gothic, although the allied idea of universally valid aesthetic standards was the basis for much anti-gothic criticism. Lovejoy has offered the explanation that the argument originated in confusion over the meaning of "classic." Citing the example of Thomas Warton's Verses on Sir Joshua Reynolds's Painted Window (1782), Lovejoy contends that two connotations of classic often were mixed: one was the sense of "universal acceptability"; the other, of Palladian style, the current vogue in classical architecture. The gothic was certainly not
the latter, but that did not necessarily prevent it from being classic in the former sense. Within the rationale of the new gothicism, it was a point in favour of both architectural and literary gothic that they were "classic" English modes.

The controversy over the gothic was a defensive action. Opponents of gothic art were not only interested in deriding its flaws; they were sensitive to those flaws because they believed in some other system, whether the superiority of Palladian architecture or the propriety of the dramatic unities, and they strove to defend that system against the encroachment of inferior alternatives. At the same time they were enforcing the rules for social standing, taste and knowledgeability. It was natural that the range of objects considered gothic should be very wide, including not only buildings and literary works but also various kinds of political opinion, political action, and social behaviour—in general, the outré. It is easy to see why the terminological controversy was so often inconclusive, when its terms of reference were as ill-defined as any in seventeenth- or eighteenth-century critical discourse. The prejudices which ascribed outlandish origins to medieval art, which caused the term gothic to signify, on the level of ordinary usage, something like "barbarous" or "ignorant," added a tone of personal acrimony to the dispute over styles and values.

The controversy over the gothic was restricted in its distribution because of differences in class interests and regional practices. An important factor was the gap between traditional craftsmanship and the realm of aesthetic disputes. It was not until the middle of the seventeenth century that a concept of competing styles, a necessary idea for
the maligning of the gothic, was established in England, and even then the impact of that concept was greater on one class of builders than another.

For men in the North the difference between Renaissance and medieval only became clear when pure Renaissance buildings were built there; up till then English architecture was a mixture of both styles, but accepted as classical. The difference between these buildings and Gothic was not very great and was not really appreciated. Only when Inigo Jones was building, did it become clear that the Italianate was radically different from the Gothic and that there were in fact two styles. 

This relatively late introduction of stylistic differentiation into England finally gave rise to a sense of dissatisfaction with the native, hybrid style. Builders and patrons who knew the "better" style began to perceive the customary manner as vulgar and debased.

Even after this infiltration of neo-classical distaste, a belief in the suitability, indeed the desirability, of native design and technique persisted:

In country districts with plenty of natural materials and a strong local tradition, domestic architecture remained untouched by Italian influences even in the eighteenth century. . . . Barns and farm buildings were still roofed and buttressed in the Gothic way; and country workmen followed Pugin's True Principles with a naturalness which he praised but could never attain. While medieval ornament was enjoying its modish revival in the town, medieval construction lived an unassuming country life, and Walpole little suspected that the average barn was more truly Gothic than his bepinnacled Strawberry.

Here Clark presents the main characteristics of traditional gothic building as it continued into the eighteenth century: its distribution outside fashionable circles, its use in mundane, functional situations, its emphasis upon proven practices, and its naïveté. Some further qualifications make the account of this survivalism more accurate. Gothic
survival was more a provincial than a strictly rural phenomenon. Gothic was used for ecclesiastical and collegiate work, in accord with the generally accepted practice of conforming to the manner of existing structures. The occurrence of survivalism also varied with the relative power and influence of stonemasons, builders, and architects among the construction trades.

Controversy over the gothic was quite irrelevant to the traditional builders. The nature of the work they usually did and their limited opportunities for travel and architectural education insulated them from the issues under dispute. If, as Clark and Colvin have indicated, the traditional builders did most of their work either restoring and completing churches, or constructing farm and domestic buildings, they were unlikely to have the chance to employ alternatives to the hybrid gothic style—had alternatives been available to them. Moreover, their contracts and contacts would have been with townspeople, merchants, parsons, yeomen farmers, and the lesser gentry, among whom architectural controversies and the changes of fashion were either unimportant or imperfectly understood. Their involvement with such matters was at best delayed or derivative. Builders, craftsmen, and most of their patrons did not have the resources to undertake the Grand Tour, which had promoted the growth of the neo-classical taste in England. Their exposure to the principles of neo-classical design came through academic study—if their fortune or talent allowed it—or through association with the higher level of building practice, such as the Board of Trade where Wren and his pupils were employed. As a result of these factors, a more or less passive advocacy of the gothic continued unaffected by the critical disputes or the
preoccupation of connoisseurs and amateurs. On the other hand, this kind of traditionalism gave little direction to the shifts in fashionable taste that eventually defined the valid, native, gothic style in a pseudo-historical way.

Before a taste for medieval things could reassert itself in the eighteenth century, two new ideas had to gain a place: a sense of the novelty of medieval art and literature, and a sense of their identity. The latter would be influential only imperfectly and indirectly, but neither sense was to be found at the traditionalists' level. Given their persistence in using the hybrid gothic mode, their usual lack of formal academic training, their ignorance of architectural history and theory, their isolation and reliance on local design models, it was unlikely that traditionalist builders would be a source for understanding the complexities and classifications of medieval art. In addition, since they treated the gothic as the natural, indigenous style, capable of successfully assimilating the intrusive Renaissance styles, they would not have seen the gothic, at the same time, as merely one optional style among those available. Traditionalist builders thought of the gothic as "the style in which one builds."

For the same reasons, they did not produce a sense of the gothic as something novel or exotic; after all, they had been using it continuously well into the eighteenth century. The revivalists drew that sense from a set of cultural and historical associations from which the traditionalists were far removed, if only by their pedestrian, commonplace practice of unspectacular imitation.
The sense of the novelty of gothic was more important for the revival of gothic architecture and the creation of gothic fiction; however, the development of that sense was encouraged by historical, as well as aesthetic or fantastic, interests. Paradoxically, much of the encouragement came from English antiquaries, who were immediately concerned not with the novelty of medieval art but with the process of identifying and differentiating its elements.\textsuperscript{43} This was the indirect way in which a sense of the identity of gothic contributed to the new literary gothicism—although the literary goths themselves had only an imperfect sense of that identity.

The dissolution of the English monasteries and the dispersal or decay of their holdings stimulated antiquarian activity in England at an early date. The antiquary John Leland (1506?-1552) made a place for architectural antiquities in the history of Britain which he was planning, and which finally appeared as the \textit{De Antiquitate Britannica} published by Thomas Hearne between 1710 and 1712. The \textit{Britannica} of William Camden (1551-1623) included even more architectural materials; in Camden's time the Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries was formed, with the purpose of gathering records and antiquities back to the Roman occupation.

At the same time there developed considerable interest in church documents, frequently written in Anglo-Saxon, and hence an interest in Anglo-Saxon language and grammar. This concern with language and with legal and clerical documents led to an interest in mediaeval church history and eventually to the publication of the \textit{Monasticon Anglicanum} with Hollar's illustrations; thus the English public could from 1655 on contemplate reproductions of English architecture, much of it Gothic, all of it mediaeval. No other country could boast a similar publication.\textsuperscript{44}

The antiquaries' subject matter was not limited to gothic or mediaeval artifacts. Antiquaries were by no means universally convinced of
the value of the gothic. In 1736, for example, Sir John Clerk berated Roger Gale for the misplaced loyalties of the members of the Society of Antiquaries: "I am sorry to find that Gothicism prevails so much in your Society. If your Antiquarians won't entertain a just opinion of it, they won't believe it to be only the degeneracy of Greek and Roman Arts and Sciences. In this view I myself have admired the laborious Dullness and Stupidity which appear in all the Gothick contrivances of any kind. These Barbarians had the originals in perfection and yet could discover no beauties for their imitation, but Goths will always have a Gothick taste." Even William Stukeley, the most prominent antiquary of the early eighteenth century, belonged to the Society of Roman Knights at the same time as he was secretary of the Society of Antiquaries, and spoke of "the abominable superstitions of the cloyster'd nuns and fryers" and the harm they had done to the classical heritage. Frankl has remarked that "the men of the eighteenth century... took their love for two different styles as a sign of indecision and had to excuse themselves." Ambivalence was bound to affect the antiquaries' judgment whenever they had to deal with preference between styles, instead of investigation and description. And such questions of preference inevitably came up, in various areas of their interest: the conservation of artifacts, the landscaping of country estates, the treatment of real and artificial ruins. The antiquaries were not simply historical researchers. They were involved in evaluating competing claims for cultural ancestry, and they had to consider the aesthetic implications of that competition.

The antiquaries' activities concentrated in three areas: description, identification, and conservation. Description, consisting of the
discovery, collecting and presenting of artifacts, often through publication, was a natural continuation of the work of the topographers. In its earliest stages, the antiquarian movement, like topography, had chauvinistic overtones and patriotic uses. Especially when they turned their attention from the monasteries to the monuments of chivalry, the baronial castles and manor-houses which already were being consciously imitated, Elizabethan antiquaries enlarged the sense of the nation's cultural richness and diversity. The glories of the past, vividly recalled, provided a suitable background for the glories of the present regime. Since the natural history and the human history of England were both enlisted in the service of the idea of British greatness, antiquarianism and topography became almost indistinguishable in their motives.

The scope and texture of a topographical survey, like Michael Drayton's *Polyolbion* (1622), which magnified the whole nation, was matched by the minute attention that antiquaries gave to each region. The picturesque tourist coming to a strange county was also provided with a guide to its antiquities, its ruins, castles, cathedrals, and ancient homes. Antiquaries expressed regional, as well as national pride. Antiquarian societies existed mainly on the local level and became a new instrument for achieving social cohesion and for defining local interests. It is not surprising that antiquaries often delved into the very micro-cosm of historical research: their own family background. Thus, we have Horace Walpole writing to the Rev. William Cole:

> I am the first antiquary of my race [i.e., the Walpoles]—people don't know how entertaining a study it is. Who begot whom is a most amusing kind of hunting; one recovers a grandfather instead of breaking one's own neck—and then one grows so pious to the memory of a thousand persons one
never heard of before. One finds how Christian names came into a family, with a world of other delectable erudition. . . . --I had promised myself a whole crop of notable ancestors--but I think I have pretty well unkennelled them myself.51

If antiquarianism bordered on one side on topography, on the other it bordered on genealogy. The common element was the need to complete the pattern of native things--whether geographical, cultural, or familial.

The activity of identification set the antiquaries apart from the descriptive topographers. Identification included the establishing of regional, historical, generic or stylistic categories for artifacts; the proposing of theories to explain their origins and to account for the development of styles; and the analysing of artifacts, mainly for their decorative features. These studies, although by nature purely theoretical and disinterested, were liable to lead antiquaries into the midst of the controversy over the relative value of styles, a controversy with both critical and practical implications.

The activity of conservation was a response to those practical issues, of which the major one was the use and abuse of medieval artifacts, especially buildings and parts of buildings. The antiquaries' conservatism had both secular and religious aspects. The original antiquarian attention to ecclesiastical subjects persisted, fixed there by alarming developments. Antiquaries readily involved themselves in disputes over the commercial use of churches and monasteries, or their destruction for reasons of convenience. But the developers and speculators were not the only opponents with whom the protectors of gothic buildings had to cope. In 1778, when the new gothic taste had spread in literature and design, Vicesimus Knox, one of the more rabid opponents
of the gothic, complained about the use of stained glass in church windows, noting—rather contradictorily—the "glaring colours" of the glass and the muted, gloomy interior lighting that it allowed. To Knox "the dim interior suggested the tainted atmosphere of papacy and made an appeal . . . to the ardent imagination, the activity of which the congenital classicist viewed with profound disgust." The objects of his attack included both the affectation that was papish richness and the superstitious ignorance which the painted windows represented to him. Knox's use of the symbolic connection between light and religious belief was remarkably similar to the literary gothicists':

A religious dimness may, perhaps, be deemed necessary for the bigoted inhabitants of the convent and the cloyster, whose minds, it is to be feared, are often as dark as their habitations; but light is cheerful, and cheerfulness is the disposition of innocence.  

Similar feelings led to the substitution of clear glass for coloured and attempts to brighten church interiors. A Low Church distaste for ornament and for the sensuous accompaniments to religious ritual combined with the more general distrust of emotional or irrational religious experiences to advance such "reforms."

Antiquaries regarded them with mingled suspicion and horror. A great deal of what passed for restoration or improvement of medieval buildings really amounted to extensive rebuilding in the better (i.e., baroque or neo-classical) style. Antiquaries acted as guardians against incompetent, careless or malicious restoration work; for the work of rationalizing existing churches so that they would be free from papish trappings was unlikely to fall into the hands of builders who had any stake in the original style. Antiquaries—and not only those who had
developed a special affection for the gothic—feared that many objects of historical importance and of considerable beauty would be relegated to the trash heap indiscriminately. Although many antiquaries seemed to edge toward a favouring of Roman Catholic institutions and ritual (or at least an High Church position), it was also possible to argue for the intact preservation of medieval churches and monasteries on purely conservational ground. For the antiquary, any evidence of English history was worth saving, regardless of the doctrinal or political associations which it bore.

Whatever their rationale, antiquaries practiced several kinds of conservation. They salvaged old stained glass that had been discarded. Where medieval buildings had fallen into irreparable ruin—and without knowledge of, or interest in, the constructive principles of medieval architecture, much of the damage was irreparable—they rescued whatever artifacts were portable. As Horace Walpole's correspondence with Cole and with his antiquarian adviser, John Chute, shows, it was common for antiquaries to incorporate many of the rescued things into their new buildings, usually with unfortunate aesthetic results. In such cases, the antiquary's motives went beyond conservation or the gathering of a collection, and turned into the main force that directed the medieval revival: the use of a romantic, earlier time to enrich contemporary life, to give satisfactions that the culture of the mainstream could not give.

We can see that force working more directly if we look to other aspects of the revived interest in past things than the architectural. Besides, architectural antiquarianism was rarely separate from its possible literary uses, or, conversely, from its usual literary sources.
The interest in medieval architecture certainly had not been provoked by any sudden realization of either its aesthetic or its constructive advantages. Instead, W. H. Smith notes, "the first stage of the Gothic revival was . . . appreciation of Gothic architecture merely because of its antiquity and its historical associations." Smith's list of motives for this appreciation makes no mention of some intrinsic value in the gothic: "People were interested in Gothic because it preserved ancestral traditions, because it adorned the landscape, because it inspired awe, because it induced melancholy reflections, because it gave them a congenial background. . . . It would be difficult to say that any one of these separate attitudes antedated any other, or that any one ever prevailed to the utter exclusion of any other." Clark has noted that the favour shown medieval architecture by such early journal-writers as Pepys and Evelyn, and by many antiquaries, was expressed mainly through an appreciation of the massive scale of the buildings, the ingenuity of their ornamentation, and the labour which a relatively primitive people brought to their construction. In short, they were admired because they were impressive or because the fact of their being built was supposed to be impressive.

The awesomeness of the gothic helped to determine its literary value, and its political value, also; for Horace Walpole in his famous comparison of the effects of "Grecian" and "Gothic" buildings could not resist emphasizing that the gothic cathedral was a piece of propaganda meant to enrich the Roman Catholic Church:

. . . the men who had not the happiness of lighting on the simplicity and proportion of the Greek orders, were however so lucky as to strike out a thousand graces and effects,
which rendered their buildings magnificent, yet genteel, vast, yet light, venerable and picturesque. It is difficult for the noblest Grecian temple to convey half so many impressions to the mind, as a cathedral does of the best Gothic taste—a proof of skill in the architects and of address in the priests who erected them. The latter exhausted their knowledge of the passions in composing edifices whose pomp, mechanism, vaults, tombs, painted windows, gloom and perspectives infused such sensations of romantic devotion; and they were happy in finding artists capable of executing such machinery. One must have taste to be sensible of the beauties of Grecian architecture; one only wants passions to feel Gothic. In St. Peter's one is convinced that it was built by great princes. In Westminster-abbey, one thinks not of the builder; the religion of the place makes the first impression—and though stripped of its altars and shrines, it is nearer converting one to popery than all the regular pageantry of Roman domes. Gothic churches infuse superstition; Grecian, admiration. The papal see amassed its wealth by Gothic cathedrals, and displays it in Grecian temples.56

The meaning of the objects that the antiquaries collected, preserved and analysed came from two literary sources: the activities of the literary antiquaries,57 and the experiments in new modes of poetic sensitivity, particularly the melancholy, the sentimental, and the sublime.

Literary antiquarian activity can be traced back to Edmund Spenser's decision to revive chivalric subject matter and settings, and to affect an archaic vocabulary and spelling, in the Faerie Queene.58 But the works which best illustrate the renewed interest in things medieval while pointing to the use of medieval life in fiction date from the middle of the eighteenth century. They are Richard Hurd's Moral and Political Dialogues (1759) and Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762), and Thomas Warton's Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser (1754), and Thomas Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765). These works are informative as much in their method of argument as in their substance, so that it becomes hard to separate the two.
In the third of the *Moral and Political Dialogues*, that "on the Golden Age of Queen Elisabeth BETWEEN The Hon. Robert DIGBY, Dr. ARBUTHNOT, and Mr. ADDISON," Hurd pretended to record the conversation of the travellers during their excursion to "Kenelworth Castle" [sic] in 1716. He supplied each with a different reason for the trip, suited to his character and to the arguments he would present:

These were matters of high entertainment to all of them; to Dr. ARBUTHNOT, for the pleasure of recollecting the ancient times; to Mr. ADDISON, on account of some political reflexions, he was fond of indulging on such occasions; and to Mr. DIGBY, from an ingenuous curiosity, and the love of seeing and observing whatever was most remarkable, whether in the past ages, or the present (p. 37).

The three behave like typical scenic tourists when they arrive at the Castle:

On their entrance into the inner-court, they were struck with the sight of many mouldering towers, which preserved a sort of magnificence even in their ruins. They amused themselves with observing the vast compass of the whole, with marking the uses, and tracing the dimensions, of the several parts. All of which it was easy for them to do, by the very distinct traces that remained of them, and especially by means of DUGDALE'S plans and descriptions, which they had taken care to consult (pp. 39-40).

The visitors climb to a vantage-point in the ruins, whence they can look out over the countryside: "The prospect of so many antique towers falling into rubbish, contrasted to the various beauties of the landscape, struck them with admiration and kept them silent for some time" (p. 40). Dr. Arbuthnot is overcome by "a melancholy of so delightful a kind, that I would not exchange it, methinks for any brisker sensation." And he wonders "how it is that the mind, even while it laments, finds so great a pleasure in visiting these scenes of desolation" (pp. 40-41). Addison, however, suffers no such mixed emotion, only pleasure, "a fiction of the
imagination, which makes me think I am taking revenge on the once prosperous and overshadowing height . . . of inordinate Greatness" (p. 41). He observes with satisfaction the fact that humble farmers live in the lodge once occupied by the overbearing porter of the Castle, while all the trappings and ceremony of the overlords have dropped into oblivion.

This observation soon turns into an overtly political reading of the scene. For Addison, the Castle

awakens an indignation against the prosperous tyranny of those wretched times, and creates a generous pleasure in reflecting on the happiness we enjoy under a juster and more equal government. . . . I never see the remains of that greatness which arose in past ages on the ruins of public freedom and private property, but I congratulate with myself on living at a time, when the meanest subject is as free and independent as those royal minions; and when his property, whatever it be, is as secure from oppression, as that of the first minister (pp. 44-45).

The ensuing argument is almost entirely between Addison and Arbuthnot; for Digby, although he mostly favours Dr. Arbuthnot's side, seldom offers an opinion of his own. Throughout the discussion Arbuthnot is the mouthpiece for Hurd's opinions.

The Dialogue deals in moral and political, not aesthetic, values; therefore, the arguments which Addison is made to bring against non-classical art and medieval customs are not the kind found in the real Addison's papers on the Pleasures of the Imagination. These former arguments are associative, whereas those in the Spectator often try to give some psychological account of an object's effects. It is also significant that the chivalry and romance (or the tyranny and pomp) which are so much an issue in the Dialogue belong to the Tudor period; they are the romance of Sidney, Shakespeare, or even the seventeenth-century French romantic revival. Because the arguments do not directly
take in medieval things, it was possible to skirt religious problems in the Dialogue, to delay treating the issue of "monkish superstition" that always arose in eighteenth-century medievalism.

Arbuthnot defends Elizabethan culture by relating it to the culture of the Greek and Roman golden ages. He compares the organized combat of the tournaments to the Olympic Games and the spectacles staged in the Roman arenas. He emphasizes the classical content of the Elizabethan court masques. Through these means Hurd was trying to win a measure of respectability for chivalric customs and romance literature, by stressing their actual familiarity, their ability to fit within existing cultural limits; thus far, he stayed away from heterodox aims and methods. There is, for example, no attempt in the Dialogue to justify the romance or the customs of chivalry according to their own rules or standards. Instead Hurd relied on criteria about which there was already agreement. In that way his work in the Dialogue resembled that of the popularizer of gothic architecture, Batty Langley, of whom Walpole said that he had "endeavoured to adapt Gothic architecture to Roman measures; as Philip Sidney attempted to regulate English verse by Roman feet."  

Despite his desire to avoid flouting the prevailing aesthetic and moral standards, Hurd showed one important change in his attitude toward the gothic, a change signalled through his terminology. In the Third Dialogue we meet, for the first time in critical discourse, a neutral use of the term gothic, even if it does not properly apply to the subjects under discussion. The degree of the change comes across clearly in the contrast between Addison's reference, in the Dialogue, to "a jumble of Gothic romance and pagan fable" (p. 65) and Arbuthnot's
"Gothic Tilts and Tournaments" (p. 54): Addison makes Gothic and "pagan" roughly equivalent in meaning; Arbuthnot treats Gothic as the name for a period. From this point we can see the equation "gothic equals medieval or quaintly archaic" begin to compete with the derogatory equation "gothic equals barbarous."

For Hurd the word gothic was a simple means of distinguishing "classic" or "Grecian" objects from those which could be grouped loosely under the heading medieval. By 1771, when James Beattie, in The Minstrel, mentioned "my gothic lyre" and "gothic days," the relative neutrality of the term showed even in its spelling: "the lower case 'g' indicates that the term is losing its racial and linguistic affiliations."62

Compared with the earlier equation "gothic equals barbarous" Hurd's neutrality must have seemed more like praise. As reaction to things medieval became more sophisticated, the term gothic wavered in meaning between neutrality (for the purpose of identifying artifacts) and outright idealization. This shift accompanied the development of the concept of le bon vieux temps in eighteenth-century France, and its English counterpart:

... not only were the romances of the Middle Ages prettified but the reading public derived from them and other second-hand sources a set of idealized notions concerning "Gothic" life. Writers and readers of the second half of the century lent to medieval men and women the virtues that Tacitus granted to the Germans in order to satirize the vices of Rome. ... And because for a time nobody was conscious of racial or national distinctions, even less of chronological ones, all medieval men were pictured, as courageous, loyal, sober, chaste, honest and sincere.63

There is an undercurrent of skepticism about the quality of life in earlier times, in the Third Dialogue, that saves Hurd from any charge of idealization. Even on Arbuthnot's side of the fictitious discussion
lurks an acknowledgment that darkness and barbarity formed the background
to the Elizabethan world; that the principal value of chivalric customs
and romance literature was their power to lift people occasionally above
those basic conditions.

Hurd carried the ambivalence of the Third Dialogue into his larger
antiquarian work, the *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762). The
*Letters* do make a more definite claim for the independent value of the
romances, but traces of less favourable attitudes and terminology remain:

> The spirit of Chivalry, was a fire which soon spent itself:
> But that of Romance, which was kindled at it, burnt long,
> and continued its light and heat even to politer ages.
> The greatest geniuses of our own and foreign countries
> . . . were seduced by these barbarities of their forefathers;
> were even charmed by the Gothic Romances. Was this caprice
> and absurdity in them? Or, may there not be something in
> the Gothic Romance peculiarly suited to the views of a
> genius, and to the ends of poetry? And may not the philo­
> sophic moderns have gone too far, in their perpetual ridicule
> and contempt of it? (pp. 80-81).

The rhetorical questions introduce a radically new defence of romance
literature, but phrases like "politer ages" and "seduced by these bar­
barities" betray ingrained attitudes, or at least Hurd's use of those
attitudes to shield himself from accusations of "caprice and absurdity."

This passage from Letter I also sets out the main purpose of the
*Letters*: to show in detail the reasons for the romances' suitability "to
the views of a genius, and to the ends of poetry." The *Letters* go
beyond the Third Dialogue as literary research; instead of aiming to
modify the general reputation of an historical period, they urge that a
specific range of subject matter, a specific imaginative power be used
again in literary creation.
The first four Letters, however, are given over to a study of the chivalric code which Hurd regarded as the source for the romances. Here too the older prejudices show up. Hurd still could see that chivalric manners resembled madness, for they included fanaticism, recklessness and single-mindedness. Consequently, he had to relate these characteristics to the needs of heroic poetry, in order to connect them with art rather than barbarity.

Hurd's sources for his research were, at best, second-hand. He admits in the fourth Letter that he did not learn about chivalry from the old romances directly, for he had not "perused these barbarous volumes my self; much less would I impose the ungrateful attack upon you. . . . Thanks to the curiosity of certain painful collectors, this knowledge may be obtained at a cheaper rate" (p. 94). Hurd thus evaded the question of why he did not consult the romances himself and of what effect this might have on the validity of his conclusions.

In Letter V Hurd returned to the idea of a correspondence between Homeric and romantic depictions of heroism, acknowledging that the idea originated with Sainte-Palaye (p. 95). This parallel recalls the strategy of the Third Dialogue: use of the similarities between the classical and the gothic in order to prove the value of the latter. Hurd pursued these resemblances further in Letter V, observing that the political organization of Homeric Greece was like the feudal system: "an infinite number of petty independent governments." His main conclusion was that similar social institutions and customs arose because of similar political arrangements, a "common corresponding state" (p. 104). He worked around the problem of different religious institutions by declaring that
"the religious character of the knight was an accident of the times, and no proper effect of his civil condition" (p. 104). This was a strange statement from a bishop of the Church of England, since it implied that politics were essential in forming the social order and religion merely contingent.

In Letter VI Hurd changed the force of his comparisons and began to demonstrate the superiority of romantic to classical literature. After supporting his preference with citations from classical and gothic writers, Hurd concluded that "the fancies of our modern bards [i.e., Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton] are not only more gallant, but . . . more sublime, more terrible, more alarming, than those of the classic fablers . . . you will find that the manners they paint, and the superstitions they adopt, are the more poetical for being Gothic" (p. 114). The gothic had the advantage of the classical "in producing the sublime" (p. 117). Early in the same Letter, Hurd imagined that Homer himself, given the chance to judge, would have preferred "the manners of the feudal ages": "And the grounds of this preference would, I suppose, have been 'The improved gallantry of the feudal times'; and the 'superior solemnity of their superstitions'" (p. 108; the 1788 edition has "Gothic knights" instead of "feudal times").

At this point in the Letters it is already clear that Hurd was not writing a mere antiquarian treatise, an analysis of forgotten documents with mild apologies for their strangeness. He had set out to re-introduce hitherto unacceptable, contemptible subject matter into poetry, but he was also presenting an alternative set of standards for judging the quality of poetry, standards which were based on its disturbing effects,
rather than its beauty. After all the habitual connecting of the gothic with superstition in a negative way, Hurd had taken a new critical direction by suggesting that there were kinds of superstitions, and that some could produce stronger effects in poetry than others. And if one was to use superstitions in poetry, it was much better that they be Christian rather than pagan superstitions; that was another reason for preferring the gothic to the classical imagination—although the gothic was only more Christian, not truly Christian.

Hurd's greatest accomplishment in Letter VI was his argument for the flexibility of critical judgments, and his recognition that artistic standards are founded on a framework which is not necessarily fixed. Hurd demonstrated this idea in his defence of Spenser's Faerie Queene.

A kind of defence had been tried before, in Thomas Warton's Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser, the first edition of which appeared in 1754, when Warton was only twenty-six years old. This work would have been before Hurd's mind when he composed his own defence; a second edition of the Observations, revised, came out in 1762, the same year as the Letters. Comparing the defences, Arthur Johnston has noted that "Warton's work is the more crabbed and detailed work of the scholar; he had read the romances to which he traced Spenser's debt. It is therefore with Warton, and not with Hurd, that the romances themselves enter the field of historical criticism of literature." Warton was equipped to apply historicist techniques and ideas to his subject. Yet, he was still beset by the lingering critical doubts and the rigid standards of his time: "One half of Warton's mind still approved of these standards. Even when allowing that the Faerie Queene should not be judged as a
classical epic, he could not divest himself of his preconceptions; he did not take the bold step of searching the poem for quite other principles of organization and design."

Hurd took that step—the lesser scholar, with the more radical influence. He was sure that some other critical approach to the *Faerie Queene* would reveal the poem in a different light: "Under this idea then of a Gothic, not classical poem, the *Faery Queen* is to be read and criticized. And on these principles, it would not be difficult to unfold its merit in another way than has been hitherto attempted" (p. 115). Hurd exposed the problem of relativity in Letter VIII, through an architectural analogy, the force of which is all the more striking because Hurd's claims for the autonomous value of the gothic offered an alternative to the compromise invented by the neo-Vitruvians, like the Langley brothers, for gothic architecture:

> When an architect examines a Gothic structure by Grecian rules, he finds nothing but deformity. But the Gothic architecture has its own rules, by which when it comes to be examined, it is seen to have its merit, as well as the Grecian. The question is not, which of the two is conducted in the simplest or truest taste: but, whether there be not sense and design in both, when scrutinized by the laws on which each is projected.

> The same observation holds of the two sorts of poetry. Judge of the *Faery Queen* by the classic models, and you are shocked with its disorder; consider it with an eye to it's [sic] Gothic original, and you find it regular. The unity and simplicity of the former are more complete: but the latter has that sort of unity and simplicity which results from its nature (pp. 118-119).

Despite the concession of more complete "unity and simplicity" to classical art and literature, the important feature of this analogy is the argument, like the one for superstitions, that there are *kinds* of "unity and simplicity," each suited to a particular style of work, and that
only against these should the work be judged. This idea allowed Hurd to attribute much of the contempt for romantic literature among critics to their misapplication of the classical criterion of unity of action to the gothic, whose corresponding proper criterion was unity of design.

In Letter IX Hurd asserted as a general principle "the preeminence of the Gothic manners and fictions, as adapted to the ends of poetry, above the classic" (p. 128). He explained the decline in esteem for the romances by referring to the unfamiliarity of the life they depicted. Since, according to Hurd, there was no adequate representation of chivalric manners before they had passed away and become strange, all the masterpieces of romance were retrospective, imitative, romantic in their distance from the subject. By the time romances were written, the conditions under which they could be appreciated had disappeared; it was hard to believe that they were anything more than extravagant, fictitious impositions. Classical heroic poetry had escaped a similar stigma, Hurd claimed, because Homeric manners were still recognizable in many primitive or natural societies; therefore, reality was still capable of verifying the fiction. Classical manners and subjects were considered universal, whereas gothic were not. No doubt this was because the resemblances between them had been overlooked.

Finally Hurd took up the test of truth, and its shortcomings when applied to fiction. Critics who had been trained to distinguish between deceitful, harmful fictions and true imitations of nature "suppose that the poets, who are lyars by profession, expect to have their lyes believed. Surely they are not so unreasonable. They think it enough, if they can but bring you to imagine the possibility of them. . . . Does
any capable reader trouble himself about the truth, or even the credi-
bility of their fancies? Alas. no; he is best pleased when he is made
to conceive . . . the existence of such things as his reason tells him
did not, and were never likely to, exist" (pp. 135-136). Reason opposes
the reader's deceiving himself, but is pacified temporarily when the
romance assumes the protective guise of allegory, and with it an air of
moral seriousness and intellectual complexity. In the end, however,
"assisted . . . by party, and religious prejudices," reason "would endure
these lying wonders, neither in their own proper shape, nor as masked in
figures" (p. 154).

Henceforth, the taste of wit and poetry took a new turn:
And the Muse, who had wantoned it so long in the world of
fiction, was now constrained, against her will, to ally
herself with strict truth, if she would gain admittance
into reasonable company.

What we have gotten by this revolution . . . is a great
deal of good sense. What we have lost, is a world of fine
fabling (p. 154).

Hurd could not fully approve this exchange. Implicit in his doubts
about it was the possibility that telling the truth was not a necessary
feature of fiction or poetry. Hurd was much less troubled by the conse-
quences of "lying" in fiction than were other mid-eighteenth-century
critics and reviewers.

Although the Letters carry some marks of antiquarian scholarship,
their overall effect is to bring out the novelty of gothic literature,
not to identify its characteristics carefully and lay them out in a
systematic way. By disregarding the claims of moral or mimetic truthful-
ness upon fiction, and by admitting that terror, sublimity and strong
feeling were legitimate ends for it, Hurd left the way open to reverse
the common attitude toward the gothic; for, if the pleasures of the
gothic and the fantastic were not innately inferior to the licit, rational pleasures of classical art, it no longer made sense to regard the makers of the gothic (whether ancient or contemporary) as barbarians.

No more than in the Third Dialogue did Hurd cross over in the Letters to idealize the age of chivalry or its products. The point of his study was to identify and remedy a deficiency in imaginative freedom which had affected the literature of his own time. Hurd was not optimistic, however, that it would be easy to recover that freedom. He believed that the efforts of Tasso, Ariosto, Spenser and Milton to revive chivalric subjects in poetry had been relatively futile; these poets had laboured under the influence of a classical tradition which was tightening its hold on literary convention, and they had felt obliged to respond to it. Hurd preferred to their hybrid works a (hypothetical) unmixed sort of romance, but, by his own admission, he was not certain where it existed. Nevertheless, if gothic values and subjects were to enter poetry again, Hurd believed that they had to come from the original sources, not from diluted imitations.

The discovery of gothic originals formed the background to Thomas Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765). At the centre of Percy's work was the famous folio manuscript, "containing one hundred and ninety-five Sonnets, Ballads, Historical Songs, and Metrical Romances." The authenticity and actual existence of this manuscript were subjects of controversy after the first edition of the Reliques appeared, so that Percy's nephew (also Thomas Percy) felt it was necessary to give an account of its whereabouts and physical condition when he edited the fourth edition of 1794. The important facts about Percy's source
materials, for the purposes of this study, are these: the manuscripts were likely to be physically decayed or mutilated (we are sure of the extent of the damage in the case of the main folio); in addition, both Percy and his nephew were convinced that the texts had been corrupted during the process of transmission and recording, through the ignorance or laziness of singers and scribes; and finally, both Bishop Percy's attitude toward his source materials—which varied between apology and condescension—and his use of them were a direct function of his belief that they were defective as transmitted.

In his own Preface, Percy gives some sign of the doubts which might have prevented him from compiling these poems—but did not—and offers a rationale for his work:

The reader is here presented with select remains of our ancient English Bards and Minstrels, an order of men who were once greatly respected by our ancestors, and contributed to soften the roughness of a martial and unlettered people by their songs and their music. . . .

As most of them [the poems] are of great simplicity, and seem to have been merely written for the people, [the editor] was long in doubt, whether, in the present state of improved literature, they could be deemed worthy of the attention of the public. At length the importunity of his friends prevailed, and he could refuse nothing to such judges as the author of The Rambler, and the late Mr. Shenstone.

Accordingly such specimens of ancient poetry have been selected, as either show the gradation of our language, exhibit the progress of popular opinions, display the peculiar manners and customs of former ages, or throw light on our earlier classical poets.

They are here distributed into VOLUMES . . . showing the gradual improvements of the English language and poetry, from the earliest ages down to the present. . . .

In a polished age, like the present, I am sensible that many of these reliques of antiquity will require great allowances to be made for them. Yet have they, for the most part, a pleasing simplicity, and many artless graces, which in the opinion of no mean critics* have been thought to compensate

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*Mr. Addison, Mr. Dryden, and the witty Lord Dorset, &c. See the Spectator, No. 70. To these might be added many eminent judges now
for the want of higher beauties, and, if they do not dazzle
the imagination, are frequently found to interest the heart
(I, xv-xvi).

Percy was a scholar, a student of languages, a translator, a liter-
ary historian, and a poet. Even more than Hurd, he was afraid of commit-
ting some outrage against the prevailing standards of taste, but the
weighty apparatus of his scholarship gave him the means of satisfying
the distinct needs of three groups: the antiquaries, the critical readers,
and the new literary Goths (of whom Percy could scarcely have been aware).
The Reliques contain a formidable array of documentation and explanation.
Three introductory essays, one for each volume, provide information about
Percy's sources, the evolution of ballads and romances from an histor-
ical to a fictional purpose, and the cultural milieu which produced
the poems and songs. The first treatise, the "Essay on the Ancient
Minstrels in England" (I, xxv-lx), is thoroughly larded with supplements:
the footnotes combined with the separate "Notes and Illustration" take
up as much space as the main body of the essay. Percy admitted that "the
desire of being accurate has perhaps seduced him into too minute and
trifling an exactness" (p. xix), but the defects of the ballads seemed
to justify this attention.

A sense of defective materials also determined Percy's editorial
policy, yet he remained able to reconcile various demands upon him:

... the old copies ... were often so defective or cor-
ruped, that a scrupulous adherence to their wretched
readings would only have exhibited unintelligible nonsense,
or such poor meagre stuff as neither came from the bard nor
was worthy the press; when, by a few slight corrections or

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alive. The learned Selden appears also to have been fond of collecting
these old things." (Percy's note, p. xvi.)
additions, a most beautiful or interesting sense hath started forth, and this so naturally and easily, that the Editor could seldom prevail on himself to indulge the vanity of making a formal claim to the improvement. Yet it has been his design to give sufficient intimation where any considerable liberties were taken with the old copies, and to have retained, either in the text or margin, any word which was antique, obsolete, unusual, or peculiar. His object was to please both the judicious antiquary and the reader of taste; and he hath endeavoured to gratify both, without offending either (I, xix-xx).

As Percy himself anticipated in his Preface, it was possible to read the Reliques in several different ways, for several different reasons. The antiquary found there important records of England's literary, linguistic and cultural development, treated with due respect and care (as Percy assured him). The critical reader could find there a poetic form which he probably had not considered worth his interest before, but which had some inherent attraction aside from its historical value. These two ways of treating the Reliques tended to support each other: the antiquary received some release from the usual charge that he dealt only in esoterica from the fact that the ballads were pleasurable to read, and the critical reader received a serious excuse for indulging in this out-of-the-way form from the fact that it was historically significant. Of course Percy's evident scholarship was reassuring to both groups, for it promised the requisite purity of text and historical interpretations to the one, while it considered the sensitive tastes and critical scruples of the other. If Percy seems now less blatant an advocate of a new position than was Hurd, that is partly because it is hard to tell whether he meant the ballads to illustrate his commentary or his commentary to justify his subject. Although Percy did not argue at any length for an alternative to the poetry of his day, as Hurd had done, his discovery of
redeeming qualities in the old ballads and lyric poetry, and his evoca-
tion of the chivalric institutions and the minstrelsy, contributed to
the increasingly receptive attitude toward medieval things, and thus
satisfied the needs of that third group of readers: the new goths.

The *Reliques* helped to direct renewed attention to folk and popular
literature, to make these seem less distant and vulgar, and more deserv-
ing of serious study—even if it took Percy's "improvements" to bring
about this change. However, Percy not only elevated the ballads and
songs in linguistic or cultural significance; he also opened them as a
source of rich imagery and emotional power. He exposed the crudeness,
quaintness and strangeness of "ancient" poetry (though much of the poetry
in the *Reliques* was no more than a century old); he himself realized
(correctly) that these qualities needed apology and correction, since
contemporary taste demanded something better. But by making the strange
poetry accessible he made provision for that reaction to change, and for
a new emotional and thematic range to expand in modern poetry.

Antiquaries contributed a fund of tentative knowledge about the
cultural life of former ages, and preserved that life through the con-
servation of buildings and other physical remains, or through the
collecting of manuscripts which otherwise would have been relegated to
the oblivion of the university libraries and great private collections.
The antiquaries made English cultural and political history more readily
available and, therefore, potentially more influential on the popular
imagination. It is hard to estimate the value of this kind of work for
the writers of gothic fiction, however inept many antiquaries may seem
now as scholars, however little gothic fiction adhered to the pedestrian
facts that came out of antiquarian research. At least antiquaries gave the basis in concrete detail which sometimes prevented gothic fiction from consisting wholly of formulaic plots and vague atmospherics. The antiquaries were mainly concerned with the identity of the gothic, the fiction writers with its novelty, but the antiquaries had provided, perhaps without intending to or realizing the consequences, an object lesson in the latter: the past was enjoyable and exciting to visit, through the intellect or through the imagination.

The strangeness of the gothic was balanced by its recognizable place in English history. It held a racial and national affinity. It was a central paradox of eighteenth-century medievalism that an object could exert equal attraction because it was alien and because it was indigenous.

A prime example of this dual meaning comes from the interest in ruins, which derived from both antiquarian and poetic sources. It expressed itself in the building of artificial ruins to complete picturesque landscapes, or in the including of real ruins in a scene. Inevitably the question of the proper style for ruins arose. Antiquaries had studied both Roman and medieval ruins in England, but the latter, obviously, were more numerous. The idea that the gothic was a more natural style gave some support to the preference for gothic ruins. The naturalness of the gothic was based partly on analogies between gothic buildings and the new manner of English gardening which had gained ground since the late seventeenth century—both were supposed to share such qualities as irregularity, surprise, rustication, and curvilinearity. In addition, the naturalness of gothic was based on the sheer abundance of gothic building in England. Thus it also was natural in the sense of
being native. At least the new gothic could mimic traditional work fairly well. William Mason, for example, preferred gothic to classical ruins in gardens, reasoning that since classical ruins were much less common in England than in Italy it was pretentious to use them to decorate an English garden. Mason thus combined a concern for truthfulness and consistency with a sense of what was properly English. (He might also have pointed out that the gothic was related, through aesthetic theory, to the new English manner of gardening of which he was a student.) Lord Kames believed that classical ruins were less desirable because they "depressed the beholder, reminding him of the tragic circumstance that the barbarians had triumphed over the taste of the ancients. As the condition of the Gothic ruin . . . represented merely the victory of time over strength, it was on that account to be preferred. It did not convey any painful ideas, but affected the spirit with a melancholy such as was only a source of pleasure to a person of fine sensibility." Kames apparently chose not to link the gothic builders with the "barbarians" who had "triumphed over the taste of the ancients"; at any rate, that association did not affect the general significance he attributed to the gothic, not because it was either alien or familiar, but because it was symbolical. Kames looked at the gothic ruin which was becoming a common fixture of the revived cult of mutability, and did not treat it historically, as he did the classical ruin.

With the discourse on Kenilworth Castle in Hurd's Third Dialogue we encounter arguments about the gothic that deal not with aesthetic continuity or consistency (as with Mason), not with erosion by time (as with Kames), but with social change and ancestry, with government and
culture. When the fictitious Addison inveighs against the "prosperous tyranny" of the Elizabethan nobles and indulges a "generous pleasure in reflecting on the happiness we enjoy under a juster and more equal government," all this inspired by the sight of the Castle before him, he is registering a complex of political responses. The gothic ruin—gothic in the broader allowance of his time—is a symbol of a political and social system alien from the contemporary one, and reassuringly inferior to it. Addison's position is based on a parallel between bad government and bad architecture. Both the gothic castle and gothic tyranny are intrusive forms, alien to the true English spirit which was better served by the reformation of architecture under neo-classicism and the securing of political and religious freedom after the Revolution of 1688.

The various reactions to the gothic ruin were merely symptomatic of the conflicting motives of literary and architectural gothicists. The new gothicists entertained a range of historical attitudes or perspectives which were not entirely consistent with each other, and which brought an equal measure of complexity to gothic fiction. Frequently they viewed English history in terms of antithetical social or religious forces, and their literary works usually chose to approach these forces at some point of confrontation and conflict.

The ambivalent historical perspectives of the gothicists showed plainly in their treatment of religious matters, and especially in their attitudes towards the Roman Catholic Church.

Three typical attitudes towards religion emerge in a letter from Horace Walpole to his friend and protégé Richard Bentley. On his way to visit Sir George Lyttleton at Hagley Park, Walpole stayed overnight at
Oxford, where "as soon as it was dark, I ventured out, and the moon rose as I was wandering among the colleges, and gave me a charming venerable Gothic scene, which was not lessened by the monkish appearance of the old fellows stealing to their pleasures." 73

The "monkish appearance" of the old scholars added to the charming associations with which Walpole invested the moonlit scene. That they were "stealing to their pleasures"—or that Walpole imagined they were—gave to their venerability an overtone of mystery and lecherous hypocrisy such as would become common in the gothic novels' depiction of monks and nuns. Walpole's pleasure in this tableau derived from several sources: his absorption in the melancholy (he seems to have awaited night-fall before setting out on his walk), his sense of the mysteriousness, quaintness and absurdity of the comparison between scholars and monks, and his temporary indulgence of a fantasy which the censorship of consciousness recognized was outlandish and somewhat contemptible. (I must also mention that Walpole was a former Cantabrigian, not an Oxonian; this, of course, aided the fantasizing.) Walpole was delighted in the same way when a French visitor to Strawberry Hill mistook the Cabinet for a real chapel and knelt to pray. Walpole was excited that the resemblance was so convincing, that his imitation had succeeded, and that his guest was briefly embarrassed. Even while entertaining medieval or Catholic fantasies, Walpole maintained a sense of his own superiority—and his time's superiority—to them.

Later in the same letter to Bentley, Walpole expressed contempt for the dullness of many topographical surveys and hope that his projected new edition of Camden's Britannia would avoid that pitfall. He then
mentioned a further danger in antiquarian activity: "Another promise I make you is, that my love of abbeys shall not make me hate the Reformation till that makes me grow a Jacobite, like the rest of my antiquarian predecessors [sic]. . . ." Although Walpole enjoyed playing with the trappings and the ceremonial instruments of Roman Catholicism, this was a matter of manipulating superficialities, while the essential elements of Catholicism remained highly suspect, or wholly abhorrent. This balance of Walpole's loyalties, however, was not always duplicated among other antiquaries. His fears that there was a connection between antiquaries and Jacobites had some justification. Antiquaries who studied gothic churches or English ecclesiastical history had ample occasion to lament the destructive effects of the Reformation in England upon their subject matter. As conservators they felt that they were fighting a rear-guard action against those who, for doctrinal reasons—whether deist or Methodist—wanted to abolish church decoration, the emotional basis for worship, the richness of gothic design. Armed with such feelings, antiquaries made natural allies within any High Church movement. One of Walpole's chief antiquarian correspondents, for example, the Rev. William Cole, was himself a High Church Tory, a fact that Walpole sometimes had to skirt diplomatically in order to preserve their valuable friendship.

The correlation between antiquarianism and High Church affiliation was fully evident during the nineteenth century in England, when High Church members dominated the influential Ecclesiological Society. That Walpole usually realized the boundary line between his fantasies and his overt allegiances to Church and party does not remove the importance of Catholicism for other antiquaries, as a constant attraction, and as an
undeclared motivation for their interests and activities.

Walpole's letter to Bentley also suggests a third approach to religion and medievalism: apparent objectivity. Walpole described a visit to Malvern Abbey where "the woman who showed me the church would pester me with Christ and King David, when I was hunting for John of Gaunt and King Edward." Walpole thus represented himself as being interested only in the historical associations of the place, not in its religious iconography. This preference seems consistent with his enduring fascination with English history, a fascination which produced such works as his *Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England* and his *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard III*. It was also consistent with his practice in forming clerical literary characters. The friars in *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysterious Mother* may be stereotyped figures, whose benevolence or viciousness bears some relation to Walpole's opinion of the Catholic Church and medieval religiosity, but he did not concern himself very much with the doctrines they professed, the nature of their creed. They were not essentially different from the other characters he placed in the same historical period. Walpole used the Church in his fiction as a part of the fantastical world of the Middle Ages, an important but not a supremely important part. He was interested in it for the colour it provided, for the scandals and hypocrisy and fanaticism which were attributed to it in Protestant legend, and not for any intrinsically theological reasons.

But his preference for secular—or non-doctrinal—studies was not exclusive. It did not affect his library acquisitions which, Lewis has learned, were "surprisingly strong in controversial theology"; for
"Walpole liked to read about the squabbles of clerics and the sort of thing that he found in Bayle—a statement by an abbot of Leicester that he had seen at Jerusalem a finger of the Holy Ghost and the snout of a seraphim. . . ." 78 It would appear that Walpole, who "called himself an infidel," confined his interest in religion to its value as a curious outlet for human behaviour or as a feature of the constitutional system in England. He cared no more about conventional religion in antiquity than he did in his own time. 79

The complexity of the gothicists' historical outlook reflected the semantic confusion which still existed. The equation "gothic equals medieval" had not simply replaced the earlier equation "gothic equals barbarous." 80 The two meanings existed at the same time and acted upon each other. Since even in the eyes of its advocates like Warton, Hurd and Percy the gothic was a product of an age that was still basically barbarous, the ostensibly neutral sense of the gothic was "medieval" was framed by a mixture of admiration and contempt. Consequently, those advocates had several means of redeeming the gothic. The anti-goths, who were glad that they had been able to substitute a better taste for the gothic, accepted the fact that the gothic was the result of barbarous times because it confirmed their whole historical outlook. The advocates of the gothic started out with this difference in outlook: they were unsure that progress had been made, or that it had been made without cost. Historicists, like Thomas Warton and, to some extent, Percy and Hurd, could balance off the barbarity of the gothic by attempting to place it within the context of medieval society. When they managed to free themselves from the burden of prejudice, they were able to view
societies and cultures not as competing, but as different. One could also overlook the crudeness or barbarity of the gothic in order to further some chauvinistic or sentimental purpose, but the most promising way to redeem the gothic—the way followed by the literary gothicists—was to show that gothic barbarity itself had a positive aspect, that it could yield up an ideal world or could offer alternatives to the conventions of fiction.

The works and life of the Middle Ages had been seen through a filter of rational standards and expectations. As a result, the reputation of the Middle Ages had been very poor. Specific charges in this general indictment originated in history, fantasy, and ideology. The following outline of them will consist of deliberate over-simplifications, because I am concerned here not with the best knowledge of medieval life that was available to eighteenth-century scholars, but with the dubious knowledge, or image, of the medieval that influenced gothic fiction. Since discussion of specific gothic novels in the succeeding parts of this study will both depend upon and illustrate this system of assumption, I have not supported it here with careful documentation. Such evidence will be clear enough in the novels themselves.

Superstition

In the past, superstition explained many events which the modern (i.e., enlightened) world could explain scientifically. Widespread ignorance about the natural system was matched by belief in the existence of supernatural agents, such as sprites, elves, demons, succubi, and fairies, who wielded great power over human life and fortune. The credulous people were susceptible to almost any miraculous or fantastic
Religion

The Roman Catholic Church exercised control over the Christian world in matters of belief and in matters of education and government. The Church used its moral and doctrinal authority to secure, sometimes secretly, enormous temporal power and wealth. The Church hierarchy was better organized and more resistant to change from within than any secular government, and its influence was international. The Church manipulated the behaviour and ideas of its believers through entirely non-rational means, incorporating into its own rituals the superstitious beliefs of the people; it used superstitious threats to bully even kings and princes into carrying out its policies. Occasionally the Church masqueraded as an intellectual force, but its method of argument was sophistic, its philosophy convoluted and scholastic. In order to guarantee that its members would be open to manipulation, the Church made sure to monopolize the means of education and to prohibit members from interpreting religious texts or doctrines for themselves. The Church replaced reason with pomp, ceremony, and obedience to authority.

Social Order

The social order of the medieval period was the feudal system; its ethical code was chivalry. After the breakdown of Roman authority, people had to secure protection against the constant danger of murder, plunder and enslavement. The feudal system offered a certain measure of security but only at a terrible price in personal freedom. Property, dignity and privilege were distributed inequitably. Summary power over
life was not eliminated but legitimized, concentrated in the hands of
the few who were warlords and landholders. A system of quasi-religious
obligations and oaths put off the threat of violence, or directed it
into a fanaticism which took for its most infamous outlet the brutality
and absurdity of the Crusades. But such sublimations of power and
violence did not disguise the fact that most people were chattels, with­
out legal, political, economic or personal rights.

Culture and Cultural Authority

Although the mingling of religious and secular forces helped to
determine the character of medieval art, the pre-Christian history of
Europe was an equally powerful factor. Medieval culture bore the indel­
ible mark of the barbarians who had assisted in dismantling Roman
civilization and had inherited its chaotic remains. In their malicious
resentment of the balance, harmony and technical excellence of Roman art,
the barbarians used its forms merely as a skeleton on which to hang
their wild, disordered, extravagant embellishments. When they tried to
imitate Roman works, their own ignorance of the rules which governed
their making, and the debased state into which the surviving Roman
tradition had fallen prevented them from creating anything more than a
gross distortion of the originals. The barbarians made a grotesque
caricature of a culture which they were unable to assimilate. The most
reprehensible feature of medieval culture—only partly offset during the
Renaissance—was the gradual erosion of classical authority, the substi­
tution of a tradition which was non-rational, outlandish, unregulated,
superstitious, animistic, and pervaded by religious dogma.
The advocates of the gothic answered these charges without rationalizing or denying them. On the contrary, gothic fiction tended to accept the charges, often seemed bent on proving them; at least gothic fiction relied on the reader's belief that they were true. The prevailing critique of medieval life kept its appeal, but the conclusions which it generated for art, fantasy and literature changed as the possibilities for exploiting the past were realized. The customary contempt for the "primitive" stages of English history began to yield to an appreciation of the danger, passion, and excitement they could hold for the imagination.

Hurd had made the crucial movement when he demonstrated that it was possible to keep some measure of contempt for an era while admitting, at the same time, its imaginative potentialities. Those potentialities also existed by virtue of the expanded range of aesthetic experience. Categories such as the picturesque (imported from painting), the sublime (imported from rhetoric and psychology), the melancholy (imported from homiletics), and the sentimental (imported from fiction and social fashion) made up a new area of legitimacy where the gothic could be accepted. They reconciled the apparent contradiction between contempt for the Middle Ages and a taste for the gothic by making the necessary leeway for the imagination and its covert affiliations. They allowed for a separation between political or religious convictions and fantasy.

For example, while a nominal member of the Church of England might believe without reservation that the Church of Rome was an evil and perfidious force--agreeing with the charges against "gothic" religiosity--he might also believe, as a literary amateur, that Catholic liturgy,
institutions, and treachery were suitable materials for a writer of fiction, because they lent themselves readily to the sublime, the sentimental, the picturesque, or the melancholy.

And strong convictions, or display of them, did not necessarily lead to a suppression of gothic excess. The sheer indecency of the gothic was its chief virtue, for one purpose or another. Building a case against feudalism or the Catholic Church—the ostensible aim of much gothic fiction—often required that the evils be depicted with detailed thoroughness, so much so that it now seems that the moralistic element was frequently an after-thought, the "evils" the true centre of interest.

The impact of the gothic novel depended on the rawness, naturalness, crudeness of its images. Although no one, perhaps, wanted to be transported permanently to the primitive environment which it recreated, the writer could invite his readers to visit it temporarily in order to recover a store of fantastic materials which had been purged too successfully from their own immediate experiences. Along with the opportunity to indulge the fantastical came the opportunity to try out fantastic solutions to very real problems.

The old derogatory image of the gothic could be transformed in two ways, each corresponding to a different set of new, invigorating qualities that were discovered in it.

The first way was nostalgic, elegiac—and later, utopian. Its basic premise was that earlier in English history there had existed a nobility of action, a heroism of endeavour, a genuine (if misguided) religious faith, a sympathy with nature, a constant involvement with
ceremony, pageantry, and ritual, and a proper regard for social subordi-
nation, which had disappeared since. All these qualities could be
inferred from the ruined buildings which remained the most impressive
symbols of the past. By arguing that separate, distinctive critical
standards should be applied to gothic art and literature, historicists
and antiquaries had laid a foundation for accepting gothic life as valu-
able in itself.

Its loss became a cause for regret and lamentation. The various
antiquarian activities—collecting, preserving, cataloguing, publishing—
the half-researches of Chatterton and Macpherson, the creation of modern
imitations, such as the mock ruins and castellated country homes—all
these were a means of supplying the loss, of finding some substitute
that would be acceptable to eighteenth-century tastes. The actual sense
of loss of a valuable heritage was captured in James Macpherson's
Ossianic poems; these drew upon the melancholic, elegiac tradition
that had been re-established in the early and middle eighteenth century
by Young, Blair, Thomas Warton, and Thomas Gray (the last of whom
Macpherson influenced in his study of folk poetry). From the melancholic
and contemplative poetry Macpherson had absorbed tone, theme and imagery:
overblown, diffuse, emotionally-charged description, emphasis on lost
heroic ancestors and the decay of ancient virtue, sympathetically
reflected in the wind-bleached landscape of the bard's world. Even the
antiquaries, who liked to think that they were interested in the gothic
as scholars, not as enthusiasts, who wanted to appear scientific in their
diligence, could not escape the elegiac sensibility and its social
implications in their work. Their evocation of lost grandeur had more
influence on the new literary gothic than the scholarship they sought to encourage; for, the literary gothic was more concerned with re-directing a sense of personal and artistic ancestry than with ordering and describing antiquities.

Considered for its lost splendour and vigour, the rawness of the gothic was made over, transformed into the quaintness of a culture which had not yet suffered the dubious improvements of sophistication, which had not yet substituted pragmatism for chivalry, cash value for honour, a mechanistic cosmos for the demons and spirits who intervened regularly in mundane events; which had kept a place for richness, extravagance, heroism, supernaturalism, the grotesque and the playful in its art, literature and architecture.

Such calculations of cultural loss and gain were very persuasive on the emotional, associational level, and, although there did not develop at this time the wider critique of modernity that was the product of nineteenth-century malaise and disaffection, there were discernible political overtones to the nostalgia. Depending on the virtues attributed to the imaginary Goths, the previous ages could take on a tory or a whig cast. Emphasis upon ancestral virtues such as fierce independence, respect for law and property, resistance to unjust authority, and defence of quasi-parliamentary political prerogatives amounted to a whiggish version of the gothic. Emphasis upon chivalry, the adventures of knights and princes, the gorgeousness of pomp and ceremony, and the benevolence or wisdom of the feudal lord or the priest made up a tory version of the gothic. In this way, strong convictions did act as a positive censorship on the gothic, by enlisting the past in service of contemporary ideology.
In either case, the *crudeness* of the gothic—the absence of modernity—was its advantage; within this transformation of the gothic, defence of modern progress was liable to fluctuate between mere lip-service and the condescension of the casual player of the game of fantasy. Strict anti-gothic moralism was unlikely in this revised version of the gothic, however, since only favourable qualities survived the transformation.

The second way of transforming gothic barbarity into something positive seems less favourable, because it involved a drastic change in ideas about the pleasures of literature.

Its origins were in aesthetic and literary theory, with some secondary references to Elizabethan and Jacobean spectacular theatre and to the poetry of melancholy. It did not share the motives or the historical outlook of the other kind of transformation—in particular, it did not partake of the elegiac sensibility. The most significant feature of this kind of transformation was that it concentrated on terror as an aesthetic experience; on crime, criminals, victims, and abnormal psychology as especially worthy subjects for fiction; and on the gothic as a limitless source of both.

Within the terms of this transformation, the indictment against the gothic was accepted as substantially correct, as a *political and social assessment*. There was no dispute about the superiority of the present to the past in material welfare and personal freedom. Gothic life was indeed composed of all the horrors which an eighteenth-century Englishman was quite glad to have put behind him. Yet many of those horrors still held the power to provoke fear, and the reader of the gothic novel became willingly vulnerable to a kind of half-artificial terror lest the
horrid conditions return. The discovery that it was possible to accomplish this arousal through literary means, which were after all more transitory in their effects and more convenient than the sordid and dangerous practices of rumour-mongering and inventing conspiracies, inspired this second species of gothic.

The arousal of political anxieties, in the narrow sense, was not, however, its main aim, and the list of its more overtly political or religious targets, such as monasticism, the Inquisition, and feudal tyranny, none of which in reality posed much of an immediate threat to the British constitution, shows that these materials—so easily identified as objectionable, so automatic in eliciting response—were mere instruments. The gothic fiction writer brought forth familiar prejudices in order to set up a background of habitual belief against which other more fundamental, and painful, anxieties might appear. The ostensible targets were usually disguises or vehicles for such anxieties.

The elegiac sensibility succeeded in separating political revulsion from literary invention, by regarding the unpleasant features of medieval life—if at all—as atypical, intrusive, admittedly barbarous; by cultivating an image of the gothic which would lift, temporarily, the dullness and imperfection of the modern world, which would cure the sluggishness of the modern imagination. The non-elegiac gothic could contain this elegiac image, could use it for its own purposes, but in that event the image was changed, as if by a distorting lens, by the less wistful treatment that the novelists gave it. They held the nostalgic transformation under suspicion, because they were less selective in their regressions, because they were more actively skeptical about ideal
systems and the reliability of alien societies, and because they con-
sidered crudeness, superstition, and violence the essential character-
istics of the gothic world and their putative gothic ancestors. They
acknowledged the appeal of chivalry, nobility, grace, and simplicity--
and were ready to cite these qualities in support of their use of the
gothic, in order to associate it with the lighter romance--but they
finally viewed the positive aspect of the gothic as contingent or decept-
tive. The gothic novelists often practiced another form of primitivism,
holding the opinion that natural brutality, not natural virtue, was the
basis of the primitive society that was their subject. Such brutality
was valuable, even admirable, as a source of fictive situations and
figures, not because it confirmed some theory of historical progress (in
which many of them probably believed), but because it permitted a closer
approach to such sensitive topics as perverse sexuality, captivity and
oppression, and parental authority, than seemed feasible within the
conventions of the realistic novel.

The barbarity of the gothic was changed into a positive force for
liberating novelists from technical and thematic constraints. Both
means of transforming gothic barbarity met at one point of agree-
ment: the range of imaginative options had been constricted unnecessarily and
without advantage. The second means of transformation resembled the
first in that it too included a sense of loss; this was hardly an elegiac
sense, however, for it lamented the purgation from contemporary life not
of the possibility of grandeur, simplicity or chivalry, but of danger,
irrationality, miracles, supernatural occurrences, unrelied malice--
and the unrestrained art that could embody all those possibilities.
The new gothic fiction could include the lighter, elegiac sensibility by bringing it into a complementary relationship with the primary, darker gothic, like the pastoral with the anti-pastoral. This conjunction was especially common in the works of Ann Radcliffe, where the contrasting tonalities, the linking of moments of exquisite sensibility with moments of panic, despair and abject terror, was not a matter of mere narrative variety or relief. On the contrary, this pairing contributed to the poignance of the victim's situation, to the sublimity of the criminal figures. But even with Radcliffe, whose lighter moments were executed with great attention to detail and painterly composition, who was known for her powers as a picturesque artist as much as for her powers as a maker of terrors, the lighter image was often only a false omen (and this was more consistently true with Monk Lewis and C. R. Maturin), a temporarily comforting facade behind which the darker aspect of the alien world (and by proxy, the familiar one) was lurking. In fictional confrontations, the lighter elegiac gothic was naturally identified with civility, decency, contemporary moral and ethical standards; the darker non-elegiac gothic was utterly alien and threatening, by comparison, and none the less for being unexpected and unprepared for.

Confrontations between the two versions of the transformed gothic were the regular pattern in the gothic novels. Such confrontations determined two important features of them: the novels were subversive in their effects—though not for the reason their critics feared, and not always on purpose—and they managed to be subversive (or educative) through a strategy of compromise with the familiar reality from which
they departed. The nature of that strategy and the theoretical justification of the gothic novel will be the subjects of the next sections of this study.
FOOTNOTES


2 A. E. Longueil, "The Word 'Gothic' in Eighteenth Century Criticism," *MLN*, 38, 8 (Dec., 1923), 453-460: "... in the early Renaissance ... the term 'gothic' took on a new and coloured meaning, a meaning that masked a sneer. To the Renaissance, mediaeval or Gothic architecture was barbarous architecture. By a trope all things barbarous became 'Gothic'" (p. 453).

3 Robson-Scott, p. 2. Germann also finds this the point of origin for anti-gothic feeling.


5 The first edition was published in Florence in 1550, an enlarged edition in 1568. This translation is from Frankl, p. 290; also quoted in Germann, p. 38.

6 See E. S. de Beer, "Gothic: Origin and Diffusion of the Term; The Idea of Style in Architecture," *JWCI*, 11 (1948), 143-149; Robson-Scott, pp. 4-5. Germann (p. 11) notes that Filarete was also the first theorist to use the term *stile* (style) as a synonym for *maniera* (mode of handling); he adopted the term from its former exclusively rhetorical usage.

7 De Beer, p. 145. De Beer distinguishes between special and general uses of "gothic": to denote the Gothic people only, or all barbarians. He also separates these uses, which are still historical and more or less neutral from the pejorative literary use of "gothic." De Beer gives his account of the relation between literary and architectural terms: "This literary use [i.e., gothic equals barbarous] became common in France in the seventeenth century and in England also in the eighteenth. It affected the architectural term, so that some writers use the latter as meaning primarily tasteless. This literary usage and the special develop-
ment of it have produced the common view that the stylistic term originated as a term of abuse" (p. 144). De Beer cites Rabelais for an early example of the literary abuse of "gothic." Longeuil concurs in the direction of literary influence: from France to England (p. 455).

8 De Beer, p. 145. See also Frankl, p. 257, Germann, p. 11.

9 Robson-Scott, pp. 4-5; de Beer, pp. 146-147.

10 Robson-Scott, p. 6. The term would have had to be adopted, especially outside Italy, despite its historical inaccuracy (which was not concealed), if only for lack of a better one. De Beer points out that the sixteenth-century Italian critics like Vasari or Sansovino had their own term "Tedesco" (German) which had been in use since the fifteenth century and which had almost superseded the only major alternative, "moderne," by their time (p. 149). Germann suspects that Vasari was aware of the relatively recent provenance of the buildings against which he was reacting (p. 38). This would make him guilty of a deliberate distortion for argumentative purposes; de Beer, however, believes that he used the earlier criticisms ineptly rather than deliberately.

11 See Samuel Kliger, The Goths in England (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952). Kliger is interested in tribal, libertarian and whiggish connotations of gothic. His basic premise is that gothic was always used for political or ideological purposes, of various kinds, and his extensive list of the confusions which made gothic mean Celtic, Scandinavian, Germanic or ancestral shows the potential usefulness of the word.

12... the word 'ordine' acquires an authoritative significance which makes it difficult to understand how the phrase 'ordine Tedesco', which was quite common in the sixteenth century, could have been used in a pejorative sense. Presumably, the situation will have been similar to that obtaining around 1800 in respect of the words 'style' and 'taste', for at that time, it was possible to negate the normally positive force of these expressions by the mere addition of an adjective" (Germann, p. 14). Thus, in Italy, the phrase ordine Tedesco could come to mean "order as a German would understand it."

13 Quoted in Germann, p. 15.

14 Vitruvius considered that structures evolved on a regional or historical basis were part of the architect's stock in trade: they were available to him and he used them as and when appropriate. His disciples regarded German or Gothic structures in much the same light: they used them because they were obliged to do so in order to complete Gothic churches in a conformist style" (Germann, p. 15). In Vitruvian theory, the five "antique" orders were generic types, invented for use only in certain situations. A later development was the theory of "characters," according to which styles were especially suited to their uses (e.g., Church Gothic, Castle Gothic, etc.) (Germann, pp. 22-23).
Cesariano: Cesare Cesariano prepared an edition of Vitruvius' treatise (1521) in which he tried to show the validity of the theory by reference to a cross-sectional view of the original plans for Milan Cathedral.

"Quoted in Robson-Scott, pp. 10-11.

Robson-Scott, p. 12.


Kliger, pp. 1-2; see also pp. 7-33.

"Ibid., p. 3. "The translatio suggested forcefully an analogy between the breakup of the Roman empire by the Goths and the demands of the humanist-reformers of northern Europe for religious freedom, interpreted as liberation from Roman priestcraft . . . the translatio crystallized the idea that humanity was twice ransomed from Roman tyranny and depravity—in antiquity by the Goths, in modern times by their descendants, the German reformers. . . . The epithet 'Gothic' became not only a polar term in political discussion, a trope for the 'free', but also in religious discussion a trope for all those spiritual, moral, and cultural values contained for the eighteenth century in the single word 'enlightenment'" (pp. 33-34).

Kliger, pp. 4-6.

Lovejoy, p. 136.

Both quotations from Lovejoy, p. 137.

Lovejoy, pp. 137-139. "In the middle and late eighteenth century this distinction [between 'gothic' and 'Saracenic'] became familiar, and the style which we call Gothic was commonly designated 'Saracenic', 'Arabic', or 'Arabesque'. . . . Nevertheless, the same writers who, on occasion, distinguish 'the Gothic' from 'the Saracenic', sometimes continue to apply the former adjective to the latter style also, with or without the qualification 'modern'" (Lovejoy, p. 140).

B. Sprague Allen, in Ch. XV of Tides in English Taste ("Classical Criticism of 'Gothic Taste'")), notes the ready association of gothic with chinois or rococo work. Robson-Scott does not agree, however, that their status in England was exactly equal. In Germany, he claims, the primary neo-classical target was the "baroque-rococo," and the recognized faults of the old gothic served to warn against the ultimate degeneracy of the "baroque-rococo." Here the assumed affinity was so close that the term gothic often referred to objects that were, more precisely, baroque or rococo. But Robson-Scott argues that no such use of the gothic as a negative example was possible in England "where the hostility to Gothic had nothing to do with a reaction against the baroque-rococo tradition. On the contrary, in its early stages the Gothic Revival in
England was itself an offshoot of that tradition." Robson-Scott's argument would appear to depend on the fact that there was little critical complaint against gothic survivalist building in England; the gothic that was maligned was the new imitative, eclectic gothic of Miller and Wyatt, which was treated as a successor to the worst of the rococo. If anything, in England the rococo gave occasion for criticizing the gothic, not the reverse. (See Robson-Scott, pp. 15-16.)


27 The same complaint came full circle to form the cornerstone of "Gothic Revival" theory in England. Thus A. W. N. Pugin, in his True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture (1841), dictated: "There shall be no features of a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction, and propriety" (p. 1). The first two terms are obvious, having to do with honesty in use of materials and common sense in use of space and design. Propriety, for Pugin, meant the reflection in architecture of proper hierarchical relations in society, through the connections among buildings in a community or among the units in a building. See Robert MacLeod, Style and Society: Architectural Ideology in Britain 1835-1914 (London: RIBA, 1971), pp. 9-13 and passim.


29 Lovejoy, p. 143.

30 Joseph Addison, The Spectator, No. 62 (Friday, 11 May 1711), Addison and Steele: Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator, ed. Robert J. Allen (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1957), p. 109. Note also No. 70: "I know nothing which more shews the essential and inherent Perfection of Simplicity of Thought, above that which I call the Gothick Manner in Writing, than this, that the first pleases all Kinds of Palates, and the latter only such as have formed to themselves a wrong artificial Taste upon little fanciful Authors and Writers of Epigram" (p. 122). There was some inconsistency, however, for in this essay Addison was praising the simplicity of folk ballads like "Chevy-Chase," whose popular appeal and transparency he opposes to the "Gothick." Later, of course, such songs were gathered up as the epitome of the gothic taste.

31 Lovejoy, p. 146.
32 Ibid., p. 147.

33 Robson-Scott, p. 16. The list of objectionable features indicates that the so-called "Saracenic" gave the clearest examples of excess.

34 Ibid., p. 14; Lovejoy, p. 148.


38 H. M. Colvin, "Gothic Survival and Gothick Revival," Architectural Review, 104 (Oct., 1948), 91-92. This practice could overrule other considerations—under neo-Vitruvian doctrines, even the classical canon (Germann, p. 181). Clark differentiates between outright conservatism, which would have been more doctrinaire and self-conscious, and the feeling prevalent in the Oxford design community, that gothic was simply the natural mode for the type of building required. Colvin cites equally gothic projects outside Oxford, and lists masons from Yorkshire and London who worked at Oxford to show that Oxford did not "enjoy a monopoly of masons who worked in Gothic" (p. 92).


40 It would be unfair, however, to press too far with this connection. By no means all the results of the Grand Tour were unfavourable to gothic architecture. John Evelyn's outburst about the "Crinkle-Crancle" of gothic appeared in the second, posthumously published edition of An Account of Architects and Architecture, an appendix to his translation of Fréart's Parallel (1707 edn.). Previous references to the gothic in his Diary were much more positive (see Lang, p. 245, n. 30, and de Beer, "Architectural Terms," passim.). Lang supposes that Evelyn changed his mind to conform to the change in fashion: "it is clear that about 1700 Gothic was 'out' and the Italianate was 'in'" (p. 245). Architects like Wren and Hawksmoor who were educated in the Italian styles and were sure of the inferiority of the gothic used it, nevertheless, when the occasion seemed to require it, both for the sake of conformity and conservation and, as Colvin points out (p. 92) for the sake of "structural experiment."

41 Lang, pp. 240-243 and passim. Also de Beer, "Architectural Terms," p. 3.
Lang, pp. 243-245; also Germann, Part I, Ch. 6, "The Concept of Historical Development."

Robson-Scott notes that "though this interest is certainly antiquarian rather than aesthetic in flavour, it does at least show that the Gothic buildings were not forgotten. For the most part these writers seem to have accepted the Gothic style as a matter of course and even in some cases to have evinced a definite liking for it" (pp. 18-19). And Maurice Lévy: "Les travaux des antiquaires . . . montrent, mieux que la construction de rares églises ou mieux que quelques témoignages oubliés, la persistance, tout au long de l'époque classique, d'un intérêt limité mais réal pour l'architecture médiévale. Grâce à ces érudits furent redécouverts les grands monuments nationaux d'un passé glorieux . . ." (Le Roman <<Gothique>> Anglais, p. 13).


Lang, p. 250.


The topographical work was also carried through by William Gilpin's picturesque tours, and his essay "On Picturesque Traveller," in Three Essays (London: R. Blamire, 1792). The new vogue for tours produced a vast literature, including: William Hutchinson, Excursion to the Lakes (1776), Joseph Budworth, Fortnight's Ramble to the Lakes (1792), William Thompson, Tour of England and Scotland (1788), and tour descriptions by Daniel Defoe, John Wilkes, Tobias Smollett, Joseph Warton, and Arthur Young, all of which contained detailed accounts of both natural scenery and architecture. One of the most prolific successors to the topographers was John Britton who produced his series The Beauties of England and Wales in 18 vols. between 1800 and 1816, and four volumes of The Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain in 1814, with a fifth in 1818, in addition
to The Cathedral Antiquities of Great Britain (series from 1814), and Picturesque Views of English Cities (1830). See Allen, II, 200-206.

50 Clark, p. 31.

51 HW to Cole, 5 June 1775. Horace Walpole's Correspondence with the Rev. William Cole, ed. W. S. Lewis & A. Dayle Wallace (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1937), I, 375 (Vol. I of HW's Correspondence). For brevity's sake, subsequent references to Lewis' edition of the Correspondence will appear in this form: Corr., Volume Number, page. The volume numbers are those running through the whole series, not those peculiar to the individual correspondences. Full information on dates of publication is presented in the Bibliography.


53 For Walpole's eclectic use of salvaged pieces, see Horace Walpole, A Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole . . . at Strawberry-Hill, etc. (1784; facsimile rpt. Farnborough: Gregg, 1969).


56 Horace Walpole, Anecdotes of Painting, in The Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford (London: G. G. & J. Robinson, and J. Edwards, 1798), III, 94. Unfortunately, this passage has been read so as to yield an opinion more favourable to the gothic than Walpole meant to convey in the full context in which it occurs. Although he cited the cases of Inigo Jones, Wren, and Kent, who "blundered into the heaviest and clumsiest compositions whenever they aimed at imitations of the Gothic," in order to prove that it could not be a "despicable" style, Walpole was careful to qualify the force of his comparison (see daggered footnote, pp. 94-95). At the head of the paragraph immediately following this passage, he wrote: "I certainly do not mean by this little contrast to make any comparison between the rational beauties of regular architecture and the unrestrained licentiousness of that which is called Gothic." Walpole's recognition of the power of the gothic was important, nevertheless, for the kind of fiction he helped to create.

58. J. Mordaunt Crook, in his introduction to the facsimile reprint of Eastlake's *History of the Gothic Revival*, discusses the revival of interest in medieval art and customs that had already started during the reign of Elizabeth (pp. 27-28).


60. The travellers would have consulted Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656).


64. The most important of the "painful collectors" was Jean Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye (1697-1781), whose *Memoires sur l'ancienne chevalerie* (1746; tom. xx of *Histoire de l'Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*) was the major source-book for the Letters.

65. In an interpolation in Letter VI made in the sixth edition of the *Letters* (1788), Hurd explained the superior richness of gothic superstition as literary material by pointing to its origins. Christian supernaturalism (which Hurd did not connect with the essential beliefs of Christianity) augmented the previous stock of fantastical images, so that the gothic writers had a more mature and heterogeneous mythology to work with.


68. Percy's main sources for manuscripts or printed material were the Pepysian Library of Magdalene College, Cambridge (Pepys and Selden collections), the Ashmolean Library, Oxford (Anthony à Wood collection), the archives of the Antiquarian Society, London, and the British Museum.


70. See Lovejoy, p. 159, pp. 152-158.
Allen, II, 170-171 (Allen's paraphrase). Mason's concern for authenticity had its limits. He argued with William Gilpin over the use of purely decorative objects to complete a picturesque view, and saw nothing wrong with applying gothic facades to utilitarian buildings, such as barns, or with building artificial ruins, all of which Gilpin strongly disliked. See C. P. Barbier, William Gilpin: His Drawing, Teaching, and Theory of the Picturesque (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 117-120.


Walpole, Selected Letters, p. 47.


Eastlake's reticence, in his History of the Gothic Revival, when discussing problems of doctrine or symbolism shows that he was uncomfortable with the already visible link between the gothic and Anglo-Catholicism (or Roman Catholicism, which A. W. Pugin openly professed); he was nervous lest all advocates of the gothic style be assumed to be Catholics, overt or covert.

Walpole, Selected Letters, p. 50.

Lewis, pp. 124, 127.

Ibid., p. 5. Lewis cites Walpoliana, ed. John Pinkerton (London: 1799), I, 74. "Fontenelle's Dialogues on the Plurality of Worlds, first rendered me an infidel. Christianity, and a plurality of worlds, are, in my opinion, irreconcileable. Indeed, one would be puzzled enough to reconcile modern discoveries on this globe alone, with any divine revelation. I never try to make converts; but expect and claim to enjoy my own opinion, and other people may enjoy theirs. . . . Intolerance is, ipso facto, a proof of falsehood. . . . Atheism I dislike. It is gloomy, uncomfortable; and, in my eye, unnatural and irrational. . . . I go to church sometimes, in order to induce my servants to go to church. I am no hypocrite. I do not go in order to persuade them to believe what I do not believe myself. A good moral sermon may instruct and benefit them. I only set them an example of listening, not believing (Walpoliana, 2nd ed. [1804], I, 74-76).


See Lévy, Le Roman Gothique Anglais, pp. 613-614, for an argument connecting the gothic sensibility with the Revolution of 1688. Lévy pushes past his discussion of the meditative and melancholic uses of the gothic (building) to suggest a political symbolism almost identical with what Hurd has Addison present in the Third Dialogue. The gothic ruin reminds the perceiver of past tyranny and present liberty; it is a memorial to the guarantees that support the religious and political establishment.
CHAPTER II

VITALITY IN FICTION

The Mixed Mode

Sir Walter Scott was the first critic to note the close connection between Horace Walpole's work as an architect and his work as a writer, and it is significant that Scott found that the chief characteristic of both was Walpole's effort to strike a compromise between the fantastical and the probable, between the antique and the modern:

As, in his model of a Gothic modern mansion, our author had studiously endeavoured to fit to the purposes of modern convenience, or luxury, the rich, varied, and complicated tracery and carving of the ancient cathedral, so, in The Castle of Otranto, it was his object to unite the marvellous turn of incident, and imposing tone of chivalry, exhibited in the ancient romance, with that accurate display of human character, and contrast of feelings and passions, which is, or ought to be delineated in the modern novel. . . . It was his object to draw such a picture of domestic life and manners, during the feudal times, as might actually have existed, and to paint it checkered and agitated by the action of supernatural machinery, such as the superstition of the period received as matter of devout credulity. The natural parts of the narrative are so contrived, that they associate themselves with the marvellous occurrences; and, by the force of that association, render those speciosa miracula striking and impressive, though our cooler reason admits their impossibility.

Comparing the evocative effects of the gothic story and the neo-gothic building upon the modern sensibility, Scott concluded that:

It is . . . almost impossible to build such a modern Gothic structure as shall impress us with the feelings we have endeavoured to describe. It may be grand, or it may be gloomy; it may excite magnificent or melancholy ideas; but it must fail in bringing forth the sensation of supernatural awe, connected with halls that have echoed to the sounds of remote generations. . . . Yet Horace Walpole has attained in
composition, what, as an architect, he must have felt beyond the power of his art.\textsuperscript{1}

Scott's own experiences as a writer and a builder put him in a good position to realize the difficulty of reconciling old forms and themes with modern tastes. Like Walpole, he was aware of the pleasures of imitating antiquities and of the natural connection between literary and decorative impulses. At Abbotsford, "there was a fine spring of clear water, which Scott enclosed in a Gothic well-front made of some of the stones he had acquired from Melrose Abbey. With the lime carefully blackened and moss put between the joints, it looked, he boasted happily, at least three hundred years old. 'In honor of an old Melrose saint I have put an inscription in a gothic Latin verse, AVE, AVE, SANCTE. WALDAVE', 'and I intend that willows and weeping birches shall droop over it with a background of ever-greens'.\textsuperscript{2} Most of the materials for this tableau were genuinely ancient, but the associative concept that governed it was strictly modern. The problem of forming a synthesis, and the temptation to apply literary and architectural solutions interchangeably, persisted from Walpole's time to Scott's.

Walpole himself saw his building and his fiction-writing as parts of a common project, and he invited comparison between them. Sometimes the connection that Walpole indicated was merely coincidental, as when he pointed out to the Rev. William Cole, who had been reading The Castle of Otranto:

You will even have found some traits to put you in mind of this place [Strawberry Hill]. When you read of the picture quitting his panel, did you not recollect the portrait of Lord Falkland all in white in my gallery?\textsuperscript{3}
Yet, there was a deeper, more fundamental connection between Strawberry Hill and The Castle of Otranto, for the methods and principles of creation were much the same in both cases. For this reason, an account of the assembling of the real "Castle" will help to explain the characteristics of Otranto, and will introduce the gothic sensibility which shaped both creations.

Walpole bought the original Strawberry Hill in 1749, when he was thirty-two years old. He had held the lease on the property for the two years preceding. Between 1749 and 1790 the estate expanded from five acres to forty-six and underwent almost continual new construction, while Walpole collected in his home such a deluge of rare, curious or precious articles that the Description of 1781 was already obsolete when it came to the press and required several appendices for recent arrivals.

Walpole's earliest accounts of his property did not promise that he would make it into anything extraordinary. His description to Horace Mann, in the letter of 5 June 1747, was jokingly modest and demeaning:

The house is so small, that I can send it to you in a letter to look at: the prospect is as delightful as possible, commanding the river, the town, and Richmond Park; and being situated on a hill descends to the Thames through two or three little meadows, where I have some Turkish sheep and two cows, all studied in their colours for becoming the view. . . .so I shall grow as much a shepherd as any swain in the Astraea.

Walpole's letter to Henry Conway three days later repeated the comparison between Strawberry Hill and a tiny "bijou" (a previous occupant had been Mrs. Chevenix, "the toy-woman à la mode"):

It is a little plaything house that I got out of Mrs. Chevenix's shop, and is the prettiest bauble you ever saw. It is set in enamelled meadows, with filigree hedges. . . . Dowagers as plenty as founders inhabit all around, and Pope's
ghost is just now skimming under my window by a most poeti-
cal moonlight. I have about land enough to keep such a farm
as Noah's, when he set up in the ark with a pair of each
kind. . . .

Walpole's intention was to have a refuge far enough away from London
to provide an excuse for the frequent absences from Parliament which he
desired. From here he could write to his political protégé Conway, with
a mixture of feigned disinterest and real disillusionment, about an
election campaign in which "all England, under some name or other, is
just now to be bought and sold; though, whenever we become posterity and
forefathers, we shall be in high repute for wisdom and virtue."^ Although the original house at Strawberry Hill, built by the Earl of
Bradford's coachman, 8 had nothing to recommend it architecturally, it did
have advantages in location and associations: the neighbourhood was
fashionable but not yet populous enough to disqualify it from being
fashionably rural. With the property Walpole had also gained a pleasing
list of antecedent neighbours: "Essex, Bacon, Lord Clarendon . . . Lady
Mary Wortley Montagu, Pope and Fielding." 9 And his fancy of Pope's
ghost revisiting this part of Twickenham showed his poetic aspirations
in a characteristically whimsical way.

The gothicism of Strawberry Hill was an adjunct to the more conven-
tional pleasures of genteel farming, rural seclusion, and associations
with the famous, and like them it was caught up in the paradox of studied
casualness. Even if it was not whimsical, accidental, or spontaneous,
the gothicism had to be shown as such. As an aid to this deception,
there was little early hint of Walpole's dedication to a particular style
to indicate what direction his building would take. There was, at first,
no thesis to demonstrate. Walpole did not draw up a comprehensive plan until the work was virtually complete, describing it instead in letters as it grew. The reference to Pope's ghostly, inspirational presence is suggestive of his intentions, but vague. Similarly, Walpole's continued use of secret "Persian" nicknames in writing to the other members of the Quadruple Alliance signalled a taste for the exotic, the fantastical, the dramatic—but not necessarily the gothic. Thus, it was plain that Walpole's creation would be an indulgence of fantasy before it was plain what sort of fantasy would be indulged. In this apparent nonchalance and randomness, the creation of Strawberry Hill resembled the creation of The Castle of Otranto. As Walpole told Mason, in self-justification, Otranto was

... begun without any plan at all, for though in the short course of its progress I did conceive some views, it was so far from being sketched out with any design at all, that it was actually commenced one evening, from the very imperfect recollection of a dream with which I waked in the morning.11

Of the famous dream, more later. Whether or not Walpole actually gave form to Otranto spontaneously, almost intuitively, as inspiration and the force of his dream prompted him, what matters is that he pretended to have done so, and that he seemed to have built Strawberry Hill similarly, without a simple idea of its final shape to guide him. A further resemblance will emerge in this discussion: like Otranto, Strawberry Hill was the continuation of a dream and was the product of "very imperfect recollection."

Walpole's first improvements did not change the character of the old cottage in any important way, and it is indicative of his motives that, whatever size, shape or style of house he was imagining, his
initial attention was to comfort and practicality. He hired William Robinson, Clerk of the Works at Greenwich Hospital, to design, but mostly to supervise, some rudimentary work; it seems that Robinson's major job was to move the kitchen. Like many architects and builders of the time, Robinson's involvement with the gothic was by contract more than by inclination or professional training. Walpole valued him because he was compliant and because "he knew how to build an eighteenth-century house which, although it might wear out, would not fall down." Robinson and his successors occasionally influenced Walpole's stylistic choices; mainly they gave him the kind of practical engineering skills he needed in order to make his fantasies endure. Since he was not interested in building mere "follies," this was an important consideration.

Walpole's conflicting motives for adopting the gothic style and his uneven talents for understanding and using it affected all the friends and architects whom he enlisted in carrying through the project. Such contradictory influences included his fascination with the details and the associations of gothic buildings; his lack of knowledge of, and concern for, the basic principles of medieval construction; and his wish not to "make my house so Gothic as to exclude convenience, and modern refinements in luxury." Walpole claimed that "the designs of the inside and outside are strictly ancient, but the decorations are modern," and called the mixture, quoting from Pope, "A Gothic Vatican of Greece and Rome." What Walpole meant by "decorations" were not the transplanted tombs and portals which formed his bookcases and chimney-pieces, but the books, paintings, sculpture, and china that he had collected. Walpole defended the inconsistency between these objects and the rooms they
filled by asking a strange rhetorical question:

Would our ancestors, before the reformation of architecture, not have deposited in their gloomy castles antique statues and fine pictures, beautiful vases and ornamental china, if they had possessed them? Walpole must have realized the feebleness of the suggestion that he was somehow fulfilling the intention of his gothic ancestors, for he conceded that he did not mean "to defend by argument a small capricious house" which "was built to please my taste, and in some degree to realize my own visions." More fundamental contrasts between the antique and the modern at Strawberry Hill resulted from various factors: Walpole's limited knowledge of the gothic, his piecemeal building strategy, his deliberate abandonment of a conventional ground-plan, and his placing of comfort above purity of style. Walpole "loved comfort, and so we do not find him erecting a desolate monastery like Fonthill Abbey. Strawberry Hill is essentially a snug little manor-house, dressed up in Gothic clothes." One concession to the modern idea of a manor-house was the adapting of ecclesiastical architecture, which gave most of the formal inspiration for Strawberry Hill, to the normal cube-shaped room space. Walpole had no use for other, more obviously domestic, gothic characters. He detested the Tudor manner and the revival gothic of the time of James I, considering these "bastard" styles. Castles, such as Vanbrugh and Sanderson Miller had attempted, were picturesque but hard to heat, and spatially either overwhelming or paltry, depending on the builder's ambition. The sociable Walpole was not about to shut himself up in drafty monumental halls; he aimed at the charming, the mysterious, the picturesque, but
not the sublime. He was left with ecclesiastical gothic models by default.

Walpole laid a surface of gothic embellishments on the basic room-as-box. Even the Tribune or Cabinet he described as a "square with a semi-circular recess in the middle of each side . . . and with windows and niches." The construction method remained the usual post-and-lintel. Perhaps Essex, who had spent time on the Continent studying gothic building technique, might have relieved Walpole's ignorance on the subject of vaulting, but the only evidence that Walpole cared about traditional workmanship was his employment of Thomas Gayfere, master mason at Westminster Abbey, to build the garden chapel in 1772. The attempt at fan vaulting in the Gallery at Strawberry, "taken from one of the side isles [sic] of Henry 7th's. chapel," gives a full illustration of the limits of Walpole's architectural understanding; it consisted of a rectangle of elaborate gothic tracery and pendants cut out to the right size and fitted into place like a false ceiling, without structural or formal relation to the rest of the room.

In assembling the gothic surface for his house, Walpole often used bogus modern materials and mismatched elements. Strawberry Hill was full of plaster mouldings, Portland cement, stucco, and wallpapers posing as masonry. The main staircase, for example, which Walpole considered the effective centre of the piece, was lined with a "paper painted in perspective to represent Gothic fretwork." Like the gothic garden ruins which became popular in the 1720's—and which sometimes were mere facades like stage sets—Strawberry Hill was meant to be visually impressive and rich in delightful literary and historical associations but
Walpole did not expect to go through the trouble and expense of building a cathedral in order to achieve such effects. One of his shortcuts was to lift either the design of a church fixture or the fixture itself out of its original context, and to turn it to some other use. Thus, the pattern for the gothic wallpaper in the entrance hall and staircase was taken from Prince Arthur's tomb in Worcester Cathedral; the ceiling of the China Room was designed by Muntz after one in the Borghese villa at Frascati; floor tiles were obtained from Gloucester Cathedral; the roof of the Tribune imitated that of the Chapter House, York Minster; the ceiling of the Holbein Room was after that of the royal dressing-room in Windsor Castle; the entrance screen was copied from the choir of Rouen Cathedral. The list of borrowings and transplantings continues with fairly open acknowledgment throughout Walpole's Description of Strawberry Hill.

Walpole and Chute were not singularly ingenious in making these adaptations. Their collecting was partly the result of the same acquisitive passion that had made English tourists in Italy and France gullible, voracious consumers of landscape and genre painting, partly the result of Walpole's desire to secure himself in the company of "old castles, old pictures, old histories"; partly the result of the same eclectic reaction against neo-classical purism that culminated in the architectural confections of Vauxhall.

The ground-plan of Strawberry Hill reflected Walpole's divided allegiance—to modernity and to historical fantasy—and also his gradual way of completing the project. Strawberry Hill did not follow a geometrically regular plan, like that of Robert Walpole's estate, Houghton Hall, Norfolk. Horace Walpole avoided the Palladian fashion and its
attendant aesthetic. He kept the "modern refinements in luxury" that ensured comfort for him and his frequent visitors. He kept the requisite social separations: the servants' work and living areas at Strawberry Hill were still "below stairs." But he was equally interested in other matters, balance and consistency not among them. The asymmetry of the house, for example, Walpole chose deliberately. He inserted Essex's Beauclerc Tower between the existing Round Tower and the long south wing, whereas a more conventional plan would have placed it at an opposite corner, for balance. Walpole varied the size of his rooms, making them progressively larger; the early ones, he admitted, were quite small. He sought to enhance the house's irregularity of profile, the picturesque beauty of its many vistas, its own value in completing vistas from the surrounding park, its elements of surprise, and its display of the hap-hazardness which was then supposed to be truly gothic. The long course of the construction and the variety of builders employed helped to lend Strawberry Hill a stylistic incoherence that was an adequate substitute for centuries of ruination and restoration, for the admirable irregularities of the barbarous architects.

Walpole provided a recognizably gothic profile for Strawberry Hill by castellating its exterior. Although he did not choose to adopt fully the proportions of a castle for his modern plan, Walpole did think of his house as a sort of miniature castle and regularly referred to it as "Strawberry Castle" in his letters. In this respect, he deviated from his ecclesiastical interests, but the facsimile of a castle, achieved with battlements, towers, and plain external decoration, was enough for him. It would have made as much sense for Walpole to have called his
creation "Strawberry Abbey," with its cloisters, Prior's Garden, and (later) its separate Chapel.

This elusiveness of Strawberry Hill's character was suited to Walpole's flexible ideas about the estate and its purpose. Strawberry Hill served two functions for him, one attached to the contemporary world and another to the past. Walpole saw in it both a place where he might live in comfort and seclusion and a stage setting where he might realize the play of his imagination. All the concessions to modernity, the expediencies upon which the gothicism depended, provided the first. In order to perform the second function, the house had to include all the props and backdrops necessary for the full repertoire of Walpole's fantasies, which tended to be either baronial or monastic. Thus, the mixture of styles and sources at Strawberry Hill, though it made for impure gothic architecture, supplied the appropriate materials and atmosphere for each vision, whether Walpole imagined himself as a hermit monk or as a noble descendant of Sir Terry Robsart.  

The gothicism of many nineteenth-century partisans, especially those who came out of the antiquarian line, was an earnest pursuit, originating in doctrine, or in social theory, or in a sense of stylistic integrity. Walpole's gothicism, on the other hand, was always related simply to satisfying personal, imaginative needs—and those were rarely obsessive or all-consuming. Walpole felt himself the victim of ennui, of the dullness and insipidity of his own age. Seeking relief, he tried to dramatize himself and his environment, in order to bring his vivid quasi-historical dreams to life.
Walpole has left evidence of the attraction that fantasies about the past held for him. Thus, he wrote to George Montagu, on 5 January 1766, after some of the excitement immediately surrounding the publication of The Castle of Otranto had died down:

Visions, you know, have always been my pasture; and so far from growing old enough to quarrel with their emptiness, I almost think there is no wisdom comparable to that of exchanging what is called the realities of life for dreams. Old castles, old pictures, old histories, and the babble of old people make one live back into centuries that cannot disappoint one. One holds fast and surely what is past. The dead have exhausted their power of deceiving—one can trust Catherine of Medicis now. 32

There were, however, two important limitations upon Walpole's indulgence in such attractive, secure, regressive fantasies. First, his gothicism was more subversive than overt and reactionary: he preferred to revitalize and enrich modern taste, to reconcile it to the exotic and the unfamiliar, rather than to rebel against it altogether. And second, because he was subversive and because his retreat from the mundane was only temporary, not doctrinaire, it did not matter so much that his gothicism often consisted of sham and theatricality—veneer and fretwork wallpaper. Even if he had known how to build an authentic gothic structure, the stage setting, the house-as-theatrical-machine, would have sufficed for his divided purposes.

Walpole was unwilling to exchange the "realities of life" for dreams, except in a temporary, controlled way. His status and his important connections were valuable enough to overcome his disillusionment and to prevent him from becoming entirely reclusive. Instead, he discovered the means of combining the natural pleasures of both realms—the familiar and the fantastical. After all, one of the "modern refine-
ments in luxury" which Walpole valued most was the luxury of being able to summon his visions and to mix them with a comforting measure of familiar reality, of being able to choose how much of the past he wanted around him. By thus disguising the strangeness of his fantasies, he disarmed some of the resistance to them.

But not all. Walpole was provoked, nevertheless, by a certain sense of not being appreciated for his talents as an innovator. Offering Mme. du Deffand his own assessment of Otranto, he treated it as the masterwork of his personal avant-garde:

I have not written the book for the present age, which will endure nothing but cold common sense. I confess to you, my dear friend, (and you will think me madder than ever,) that this is the only one of my works with which I am myself pleased; I have given reins to my imagination till I became on fire with the visions and feelings which it excited. I have composed it in defiance of rules, of critics, and of philosophers; and it seems to me just so much the better for that very reason.  

The bitterness and aggressiveness evident here were his response to Mme. du Deffand's lack of enthusiasm for Otranto—and something more. Walpole's defiance of all short-sighted critics was equally an expression of his hope that he might be seen as a leader in some area; for his vicarious political career had already hit a large snag even as his literary career began. This fact helps to explain why he had undertaken his excursions into the "centuries that cannot disappoint one." In 1765 he had arranged to bring together the new Rockingham ministry, in which Conway was secretary of state, but Conway did not secure for him the "considerable employment" which he declared his vanity "would have been gratified in refusing." Although politics alternately bored and attracted him, he felt that they were his proper concern, more a part of
his birthright than was literature. To some extent, his activities as
builder, writer and antiquary compensated him for his inability to reach
and maintain the level of political importance that his father had
enjoyed. It was a source of both chagrin and amusement to Walpole that
he had to digress from political business in order to assert himself, and
in order to avoid the betrayals to which he believed he was so susceptible.

But Walpole's idea of his role as an innovator did not originate
simply in pique. There were particular reasons why his social standing
might give him the influence as a writer and taste-maker that he had
missed as a politician. Foremost were the limits he placed upon his
disaffection, reclusiveness, and eccentricity. He did move away from
certain realities, willingly; he did seek to insulate himself—physically
at Strawberry Hill, intellectually and emotionally through his gothicism
in general. On the other hand, he was well-suited to the task of accom­
modating his exotic visions to the views of the more pedestrian world,
of reconciling the unconventional with the conventional. He never
appeared outlandish in his gothicism, like Batty Langley, whom he joined
in ridiculing. Although his own designs were perhaps as outrageous and
fantastic as Langley's, he at least managed not to advocate them with
such earnestness. When throngs of visitors eventually came to see Straw­
berry Hill—so many that Walpole had to control them with rules and
admission tickets—they came to marvel at the richness of his unique
collection, at the miniature perfection of his Castle, not to patronize
a mere curiosity. Walpole was beyond patronage. His social position
gave him an important advantage, and he used it conservatively. As Ken­
neth Clark has observed, Walpole "did not so much popularise as aristo-
In 1750 the taste for pinnacles was associated with parvenus and Chesterfield could dismiss it as such. But when the exquisite, cultivated Walpole took up Gothic, society began to feel that there might be something in it. Moreover, Walpole's motives for favouring the gothic were relatively pure. Since he was neither a professional builder nor a professional writer, he did not have to obey his training, his patrons' voguish tastes, or the critics' strictures. Like Sanderson Miller, whose work at Hagley Park he admired, Walpole undertook projects for his friends and soon became a famous source of advice about gothic artifacts, but this work was never a matter of necessity for him. Both Walpole and Miller may have suffered from superficiality and a dearth of hard knowledge; yet, they remained enthusiasts, not cool performers of someone else's bidding like Kent or Wyatt, who attempted the gothic because their patrons demanded it. Walpole was among the first generation of real gothic amateurs who were neither builders, by profession or tradition, nor antiquarian purists; whose interest in the gothic had strongly literary motives and direction. He made a worthy successor to Hurd, for he seemed ready to fulfil Hurd's pessimistic suggestion that the vital images of the past should enter actively into modern poetry. Walpole shared with Hurd a direct, personal sense of the banality which had overcome literature and a belief that a new balance could not be achieved through radical means.

Like Strawberry Hill, The Castle of Otranto was a manifestation of Horace Walpole's dream life. Walpole promoted this connection, by claiming that the house, which was itself a dream-fulfilment, had also inspired
95

the dream that prompted him to write:

Shall I even confess to you what was the origin of this romance? I waked one morning in the beginning of last June from a dream, of which all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story) and that on the uppermost banister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. 38

The "Gothic story" that made his dream seem "very natural" was composed of the fantasies suggested by his collection and house—of these as much as any medieval works of literary fantasy. The correspondence between Walpole's dream and his chosen environment was obvious. On the "great staircase" of Strawberry Hill was a niche which contained a full suit of armour, 39 and there was a separate Armoury at the head of those stairs, furnished with two suits of armour, two helmets, a gauntlet, and many other items of that kind. 40

For Cole, Walpole described his reaction to the dream as if it had inspired him, so that the circumstances under which he subsequently wrote his novel appeared quite dramatic:

In the evening I sat down and began to write, without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate. The work grew on my hands, and I grew fond of it—add that I was very glad to think of anything rather than politics—In short I was so engrossed with my tale, which I completed in less than two months, that one evening I wrote from the time I had drunk my tea, about six o'clock, till half an hour after one in the morning, when my hand and fingers were so weary, that I could not hold the pen to finish the sentence, but left Matilda and Isabella talking, in the middle of a paragraph. You will laugh at my earnestness, but if I have amused you by retracing with any fidelity the manners of ancient days, I am content, and give you leave to think me as idle as you please. 41

Perhaps it is tempting to take Walpole's account of Otranto's dream origin at face value, but there is good reason to suspect it. This
story was convenient, for it allowed Walpole to protect himself against criticism and to prepare his readers for the kind of fiction he had created. It agreed rather too well with Walpole's comparison of his work with "inspired writings," a comparison which—as I shall show—Walpole used in the second Preface to Otranto in order to defend his treatment of the marvellous. The dream story suggested the author's lack of responsibility and his work's freedom from conventional restraints. According to this explanation, since Walpole had been driven by his dream, he was not entirely in control of the results. Moreover, by claiming that he had written hastily, Walpole could excuse the plainness or artlessness of diction into which he thought he had fallen. Because his romance followed the method of a dream, the marvellous events and monstrous figures might be expected to occur naturally, without elaborate justification. At the same time, the dream story permitted Walpole to maintain the diffidence appropriate to his dubious, mainly personal achievement. His hope that "fidelity" in "retracing . . . the manners of ancient days" might excuse his self-indulgence came as a sort of afterthought—the keynote of the dream story is amusement, idle fancy. And the net result of the dream story, whatever its veracity, was to clarify the relation of The Castle of Otranto to everyday reality, giving the reader comforting assurance of Walpole's real attitude toward his work.

Walpole used another, more extensive story to introduce The Castle of Otranto when it was first published in 1764. This imposture too shows Walpole's concern for indicating, in advance, how his fiction should be read, and his impulse towards self-defence. For this reason,
the story is worth examining in some detail.

When it appeared, *The Castle of Otranto* masqueraded as a translation "from the original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto," the English version supposedly having been made by one "William Marshal, Gent." The Translator's Preface to the first edition informed the reader that "the following work was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529. . . . The principal incidents are such as were believed in the darkest ages of Christianity; but the language and conduct have nothing that savours of barbarism" (p. 5). The reader was thus forewarned that he should take care to separate the tale's content, which was suspect, from the manner in which it was told, which was familiar and acceptable. Citing internal evidence, particularly the "beauty of the diction, and the zeal of the author (moderated, however, by singular judgment)," the "translator" concluded that "the date of the composition was little antecedent to that of the impression." This approximate date persuaded him to adduce the likely motivation for the author of the original:

> Letters were then in their most flourishing state in Italy, and contributed to dispel the empire of superstition, at that time so forcibly attacked by the reformers. It is not unlikely, that an artful priest might endeavour to turn their own arms on the innovators; and might avail himself of his abilities as an author to confirm the populace in their ancient errors and superstitions. If this was his view, he has certainly acted with signal address. Such a work as the following would enslave a hundred vulgar minds, beyond half the books of controversy that have been written from the days of Luther to the present hour (pp. 5-6).

This explanation, other suppositions about the tale's origin, and the translation device itself were convenient in several ways.
"Marshal's" speculation about motives—which, in effect, made the original into a piece of Counter-Reformation propaganda of the most insidious kind—he offered as "a mere conjecture," though later in the Preface he seemed to take its truth for granted. But for Walpole's genteel readers the signals were quite clear: a work which "would enslave a hundred vulgar minds" would not enslave theirs, especially not a work which had been discovered "in the library of an ancient Catholic family." Having introduced the reference to sectarian controversy, "Marshal" could have counted on his readers to summon up the proper measure of Protestant skepticism, to regard with dispassionate amusement the extreme measures, like this propaganda, used by wild religious partisans.

An advantage in keeping all this explanatory material in the realm of conjecture was that it remained possible that some other account of Otranto's creation would turn out to be correct. Thus, Walpole made provision for stepping into the author's role should his work receive a kinder reception than he anticipated. Such coyness was, of course, conventional. Devices similar to the translation device had already been used for some time in order to protect authors from ridicule—and from the charge of being mere authors (i.e., hacks).

Aside from dissociating the author from his work, a translation or documentary device also could lend credibility to the fiction (or satire), by connecting it with found manuscripts, real memoirs, journals or letters, by making it resemble the adventures and scandals that were the favourite subject of popular journalism. The relationship between fictional and pseudo-factual elements added to the ironic complexity of the work.
Walpole used the translation device to ensure the credibility of his narrative—or, at least, to locate it among real types (i.e., Roman Catholic propaganda); however, he also used it to ensure the tale's incredibility, to show that he was not directly responsible for its more egregious qualities. The translation device pointed to a fact that his readers were quite ready to acknowledge: that the absurdities in *Otranto*—though none the less absurd—were true to the conditions of popular belief at the time when the "manuscript" was composed (c. 1529), or at the time of the story's setting, which "Marshal" placed "between 1095, the aera of the first crusade, and 1243, the date of the last, or not long afterwards" (p. 5). Since the supposed translator was simply making available a document that was characteristic of a certain historical period, without trying to conceal its despicable purpose, he could not be blamed for preserving its outlandish mannerisms and blatant lies. If miracles and supernatural events were not to be believed in themselves, they were, nevertheless, credible features in a piece of medieval Catholic fantasy:

Miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams and other preternatural events, are exploded now even from romances. That was not the case when our author wrote; much less when the story itself is supposed to have happened. Belief in every kind of prodigy was so established in those dark ages, that an author would not be faithful to the manners of the times, who should omit all mention of them. He is not bound to believe them himself, but he must represent his actors as believing them (p. 6).

This last distinction illustrates Walpole's basic attitude toward the historical materials which he employed in his fantasies: one need not fully re-enter the past in order to exploit its stylistic resources. Sham was enough, for *Otranto* as for *Strawberry Hill*, and the successful imposition was a pleasure in itself.
Walpole's translation device managed to deceive some of his readers, but not all. Thomas Gray wrote to him from Cambridge, where Otranto had caused only a minor sensation in Gray's circle:

I have received The Castle of Otranto, and return you my thanks for it. It engages our attention here, makes some of us cry a little, and all in general afraid to go to bed o' nights. We take it for a translation, and should believe it to be a true story, if it were not for St. Nicholas. 43

Since Gray had been a party to Walpole's secret, had read the manuscript before Walpole decided to publish it, he was able to avoid being fooled and to report on the work's reception with some detachment. 44 A more typical sort of reaction came from Mason:

... I will not omit thanking you for a more extraordinary thing in its kind, which though it comes not from your press, yet I have episcopal evidence is written by your hand. And indeed less than such evidence would scarce have contented me. For when a friend of mine to whom I had recommended The Castle of Otranto returned it to me with some doubts of its originality, I laughed him to scorn, and wondered he could be so absurd as to think that anybody nowadays had imagination enough to invent such a story. He replied that his suspicions arose merely from some parts of familiar dialogue in it, which he thought of too modern a cast. Still sure of my point, I affirmed this objection, if there was anything in it, was merely owing to its not being translated a century ago. All this I make it a point of conscience to tell you, for though it proves me your dupe, I should be glad to be so duped again every year of my life. 45

Mason's pleasure at being duped reflects three features of his reaction: his lack of critical acumen (his unnamed friend seems the more perceptive reader), his desire to ingratiate himself further with Walpole, and his acceptance of the whole false framework as something of more than passing interest. Indeed, deception was essential to the artistry, since the enjoyment of it depended upon simultaneously observing and ignoring that the fiction (or the new-gothic building) was a sham. The case of
Walpole's French visitor who mistook the Cabinet at Strawberry Hill for a real chapel demonstrates the actual working of the gothic sensibility: whether one was fooled or not, what was important was that the sham be impressive enough to excite the requisite associative fervor, that the sham transport the beholder, or the reader, temporarily away from his modern scruples, while leaving him the chance to exercise them in the end. In Otranto the translation device was the chief means of accomplishing this, and it is significant that, even after he had claimed the work as his own openly, in the Preface to the Second Edition (1765), Walpole retained the Translator's Preface in subsequent editions. It was an integral part of the romance.

I have already suggested that, beyond showing the reader that Otranto had to be considered at several ironic levels, the translation device indicated Walpole's reluctance to think of himself as a fiction-writer—or to be presented as one in public. That is why he continued to place so much emphasis, whenever he discussed the making of Otranto, upon his spontaneous, uncalculated and rapid method of composition. W. S. Lewis notes that Walpole "was bored with the insipidity of Richardson and the coarseness of Fielding and Smollett," but these were mainly objections against their literary qualities, not their personal characteristics or those of authors in general. According to the Walpoliana, however, he also had no tolerance for authors as social creatures:

I have always rather tried to escape the acquaintance, and conversation, of authors. An author talking of his own works, or censuring those of others, is to me a dose of hypecacuana. I like only a few, who can in company forget their authorship, and remember plain sense.
Aside from such a direct expression of his dislike, Walpole showed his uneasiness with the idea of authorship in two other ways: through his copious apologies for Otranto, filled with references to his carelessness and lack of technical skill; and through his half-hearted defence of the moralizing in the romance. In both cases, he was primarily interested in showing that, while he had (reluctantly) become an author, he was still a gentleman; and, as a corollary, that his social position should earn special allowances for his literary production.

Walpole was anxious about the public reception of Otranto. His anxieties originated in his belief that fiction-writing was a risky occupation for a gentleman, but that only a gentleman could afford to take the risks necessary to rejuvenate fiction. His more explicit comments on the subject appeared soon after Otranto was published. For example, he replied to Mason's adulatory letter with a fair degree of apparent humility:

... I published The Castle of Otranto with the utmost diffidence and doubt of its success. Yet though it has been received much more favourably than I could flatter myself it would be, I must say your approbation is of another sort than general opinion ... your praise is so likely to make me vain, that I oblige myself to recollect all the circumstances that can abate it, such as the fear I had of producing it at all (for it is not everybody that may in this country play the fool with impunity); the hurry in which it was composed; and its being begun without any plan at all ... I think your friend judged rightly in pronouncing part of the dialogue too modern. I had the same idea of it, and I could, but such a trifle does not deserve it, point out other defects, besides some to which most probably I am not [sic] insensible.\(^{47}\)

The parenthetical reference to the difficulty of playing the fool "with impunity" neatly outlines Walpole's position. Because he was neither a professional writer nor a professional builder, he did not
have to align his works strictly with contemporary critical values. As a gentleman he could claim a certain licence to write—or to build—exclusively for his own amusement, following his own fashion, "in defiance of rules, of critics, and of philosophers." Once he had sent his creations into the public realm, however, the situation changed somewhat. The literary amateur's privilege, if abused or flaunted, might have undermined the reputation on which it was founded. Moreover, Walpole must have believed that the kind of fiction that he had written (or invented) required the author "to play the fool"—that his gothic tastes, in that sense, were potentially dangerous. This belief did not stop him from flouting convention (his dissatisfaction with conventional fiction ensured that he would take the risk involved), but it did make him cautious enough to appease conventional expectations occasionally. After the second edition of Otranto came out, with Walpole the acknowledged author, the Translator's Preface still may have offered the reader a context in which to read the romance, but it no longer protected Walpole from the dangers of innovation (and Mason's letter makes one wonder how well it ever had). Consequently, Walpole took care to define the limits of his work and to explain exactly what he thought he had accomplished.

The defence and explanation had begun, in fact, in that part of the Translator's Preface where "Marshal" was supposed to be criticizing the "original manuscript." He observed that, if the "air of the miraculous" were accepted, no other unnatural or outlandish element would be found.

Allow the possibility of the facts, and all the actors comport themselves as persons would do in their situation. There is no bombast, no similes, flowers, digressions, or unnecessary descriptions. Every thing tends directly to the catastrophe. Never is the reader's attention relaxed.
The rules of the drama are almost observed throughout the conduct of the piece. The characters are well drawn, and still better maintained. Terror, the author's principal engine, prevents the story from ever languishing; and it is so often contrasted by pity, that the mind is kept up in a constant vicissitude of interesting passions (pp. 6-7).

Here were the familiar restraints upon Walpole's imagination. He had to respect the demands of probability—if possibility were admitted—especially in matters of characterization. He had to avoid elevated or heavily embellished language. He had to sustain a high level of tension and arousal: by concentrating the action, by alternating the reader's immersion in terror and pity, by constantly confronting the reader with the emotional crises of his characters. This argument had the effect of making the romance seem more normal than it really was, by subjecting it to many of the basic rules of fiction and drama.

After defending the depiction of the servants in Otranto, the Translator's Preface turned to another area where Walpole may have anticipated controversy: the moral lesson which the romance pretended to convey. "Marshal" regretted that his "author" had not founded his story:

... on a more useful moral than this: that the sins of fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation. I doubt whether, in his time, any more than at present, ambition curbed its appetite of dominion from the dread of so remote a punishment. And yet this moral is weakened by that less direct insinuation, that even such anathema may be diverted, by devotion to St. Nicholas. Here, the interest of the Monk plainly gets the better of the judgment of the Author.

The "translator" hoped, nevertheless, that the romance would satisfy the modern critics' preference that fiction have a didactic purpose in addition to its entertainment value: "The piety that reigns throughout, the lessons of virtue that are inculcated, and the rigid purity of the
sentiments, exempt this work from the censure to which romances are but too liable" (pp. 7-8).

Having correctly identified the moral muddiness of the tale, "Marshal" threw a sop to the more rabid moralists with his lame affirmations about its "piety," "lessons of virtue," and "rigid purity of sentiments." Since he had already invited his readers to cast the full light of their modern Protestant discernment upon the devious mind that had fabricated the romance (i.e., the hypothetical propagandist's), he was unlikely to impress them with the solemnity or profundity of the fiction. At any rate, those were not the qualities which attracted most readers to The Castle of Otranto. There remained one good reason for the moral issue to arise here, and that was Walpole's desire to seem duly concerned with conventional notions of decency and serious didactic intentions, while, in fact, having no real concern for them at all. Only "Monk" Lewis, among the other gothic novelists, matched Walpole's ability to treat the common proprieties so casually, and that was largely a measure of his confidence in the power of social standing to win exemption from moral scruples. (In addition, Lewis was much more independently wealthy than Walpole.)

In the second edition of Otranto, Walpole continued to justify and criticize his work, but first he apologized to his readers for "having offered his work to them under the borrowed personage of a translator," again attributing the need for concealment to his modest expectations:

As diffidence of his own abilities, and the novelty of the attempt, were the sole inducements to assume that disguise, he flatters himself he shall appear excusable. He resigned his performance to the impartial judgment of the public; determined to let it perish in obscurity, if disapproved;
nor meaning to avow such a trifle, unless better judges should pronounce that he might own it without a blush (p. 13).

The project of self-justification and explanation became more urgent now that Walpole's anonymity was gone. A further incentive was the romance's dubious success: despite the fact that the first edition of five hundred copies had sold out within three months, there was no overnight fame, and Walpole probably exaggerated *Otranto*’s favourable reception—outside his own circle. Consequently, he wrote more directly about the guiding principles of the romance in the second preface, seeking to "explain the grounds on which he composed" it. These principles included both personal motives and ideas about the relationship between traditional romances and novels. He described the inception of *Otranto* as an occasion for experiment and compromise:

It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of Romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former, all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success. Invention has not been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life. But if, in the latter species, Nature has cramped imagination, she did but take her revenge, having been totally excluded from the old romances. The actions, sentiments, and conversations, of the heroes and heroines of ancient days, were as unnatural as the machines employed to put them in motion.

The author . . . thought it possible to reconcile the two kinds. Desirous of leaving the powers of fancy at liberty to expatiate through the boundless realms of invention, and thence of creating more interesting situations, he wished to conduct the mortal agents in his drama according to the rules of probability; in short, to make them think, speak, and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions. He had observed, that, in all inspired writings, the personages under the dispensation of miracles, and witnesses to the most stupendous phenomena, never lose sight of their human character: whereas, in the productions of romantic story, an improbable event never fails to be attended by an absurd dialogue. The actors seem to lose their sense, the moment the laws of Nature have lost their tone (pp. 13-14).
Walpole carried over some of the important points from the Translator's Preface: the promise to depict probable behaviour, the supposed avoidance of overblown rhetoric, the reference to fiction as if it were drama (in the earlier Preface, Walpole had submitted his work to "the rules of the drama"). But Walpole added to these a comparison of the "two kinds of Romance," which was implicit in the first Preface but undeveloped. The idea of such a comparison had not originated with Walpole. The immediate precedent—if not influence—came from Hurd, who had shown the trade-off between fancy and reason almost three years earlier, in the Letters on Chivalry and Romance. Hurd was not writing as a practitioner of fiction, however, and remained skeptical that modern inventions could match the originals.

It is plain that Walpole did not share this skepticism. One reason why he did not may have been the fact that he did not disagree strongly with the common line of attack against the medieval romances and their modern descendants; therefore, he could anticipate what form a modern version of the romance would have to assume in order to be accepted. His own hybrid romance depended upon, and reinforced, the prejudice against romances that was widespread among critics of fiction. An example of such prejudice in action occurs in Tobias Smollett's Preface to The Adventures of Roderick Random (1748) where he offers a short pseudo-historical condemnation of the romance, in order to connect his own picaresque use of the romantic types and subjects with that of Cervantes:

... when the minds of men were debauched, by the imposition of priestcraft, to the most absurd pitch of credulity, the authors of romance arose, and, losing sight of probability, filled their performances with the most monstrous hyperboles. If they could not equal the ancient poets in
point of genius, they were resolved to excel them in fiction, and apply to the wonder rather than the judgement of their readers. . . . Although nothing could be more ludicrous and unnatural than the figures they drew, they did not want patrons and admirers, and the world actually began to be infected with the spirit of knight-errantry, when Cervantes, by an inimitable piece of ridicule, reformed the taste of mankind . . . converting romance to purposes far more useful and entertaining, by making it assume the sock, and point out the follies of ordinary life.  

Smollett's polemical history touches upon three major complaints against the romance: (1) it did not follow, imitate, or concern itself with Nature (ideal or mundane), but instead took up unrealities and illusory images; (2) it was the product of a barbarous era, when a lying, power-hungry priesthood propagated marvels and superstitions; (3) as a result of both these defects, it had no educative value. On the contrary, the romance might lead modern children, especially those of the newly-literate lower-middle class, to believe that their lives were too stable, sane, and dull.  

Walpole exploited exactly such assumptions in order to reconcile his readers to the idea that the romances had their own licit pleasures, which they might enjoy without losing entirely their contempt for the era and the mentality that had produced them. It was the readers' sharing of these assumptions that allowed them to understand how Otranto should be read, and to trust that its outlook was, after all, reassuringly novelistic, not romantic. The translation device, for example, only worked properly if the second complaint (given above) was generally advanced; the association of extravagances and marvels with a particular historical period made the device's pretense plausible. And, of course, the thought that the romances were somehow a dangerous or a barbarous
entertainment did not reduce their attractiveness—when danger and barbarity began to seem an antidote against the banality of civilization. On the other hand, the frequent note of narrative sarcasm and condescension implied a voice outside the credulous time of the story and its original telling, a voice which expressed the modern attitude toward such fables: amused indulgence.

By assimilating, instead of resisting, the novelists' criticism of romance, Walpole ensured that *The Castle of Otranto* could be appreciated on at least two levels: as an exciting alternative to the dull common run of fiction; and as a brief excursion into the quaint romantic territory, with modern critical equipment brought along. These levels were not so much discrete as complementary. Certainly for Walpole's contemporaries, especially for those who became gothic enthusiasts, the former was more important, since it represented his real innovation and distinguished him from other fiction-writers. But here again the case of *Otranto* resembled that of Strawberry Hill. In both creations, the fact that Walpole made allowance for more familiar tastes or attitudes gave him the freedom to introduce the unfamiliar without appearing to deviate from the conventional mode. Thus, he could not have "given reins" to his imagination, unless he was confident that the reins could be grasped again, that the imagination could be subdued as well as freed. Excessive common sense justified, for Walpole, the flight into the realm of visions, but the excesses of fantasy, in turn, invited reasonable controls.

As a gentleman and an amateur, Walpole of course had more liberty than most builders or writers to choose a balance between the conventional and the unconventional. At Strawberry Hill, as I have shown already, the
reasonable controls were various: convenience and luxury, availability of materials, technical skill, eclectic tastes, and concern for social position—all restrained Walpole's architectural gothicism and, in so doing, made sure that it could not be dismissed simply as an affectation. The resulting gothic hybrid had the advantage of influencing the wider audience who were not liable to sympathize with either antiquarian or doctrinal gothicism, but who were able to react to Strawberry Hill in terms of the picturesque, or of associative effects, or of the exotic collection.

Similarly, in Otranto the two levels of appreciation enhanced the romance's acceptability by providing complementary experiences of its fictional subject: one that relieved the dullness and insipidity of "common life" with an interlude in "the boundless realms of invention," another that rationalized the strange characters, scenes and themes by referring to accepted tastes and attitudes. Again, the advantage of this compromise was that it made Walpole appear to be exercising a sort of self-censorship, whereas in fact he was reintroducing to fiction an interest in irrationality, violence, sexual deviance, and emotional excess that would not have been as palatable if he had not offered his readers a way of explaining it. After all, these were the themes that might be expected to interest a Roman Catholic propagandist, or that might have arisen naturally in barbarous times.

Walpole wanted to use the romance—or a hybrid form of it—to convert the fiction of his day. In order to understand how he hoped to do this, it is necessary to have a clearer idea of his attitudes toward the romance and the novel. Unlike the reformer Cervantes who figures in
Smollett's history of the romance, Walpole was not mainly worried about the dangerous, deluding effects of romance—though he was sensitive to them. Instead, he was disappointed by the limitations which he felt had been set upon the scope of fiction. Since Cervantes had held the romantic ideal up to ridicule, the evolution of fiction had come full circle, so that the pallor of the modern novel was as undesirable as the luridness of the ancient romance. In objecting to "a strict adherence to common life," in the Preface to the second edition of Otranto, Walpole was referring to two different things: life confined within the common definition of what is natural; and low life, populated by vulgar characters and depicted in a vulgar manner. The first sense required that fiction be dull, the second that it be ungainly and disgusting. Walpole's claim that "the great resources of fancy have been dammed up," his desire to observe the probable behaviour of "mere men and women ... in extraordinary positions," were measures of his dissatisfaction with the faithful recording of life at its most circumstantial level.

His sense of the shortcomings of conventional fiction affected the character of his own work in ways that he did not note in his Prefaces. Much of the strangeness of his technique in Otranto can be explained through the values which he did not hold, the conventions which he did not choose to observe.

The new psychological realism did not appeal to him. He thought Richardson's works boring, and he did not linger over the psychological condition of his own characters except when it overflowed in some striking external act, some exaggerated gesture of passion or grief. He was interested in the spectacle in which his characters figured, not the
intricacies of personality. In the *Walpoliana* he is reported to have complained of the contemporary French tragedy that "it is not dramatic, not pity and terror moved by incident and action--but an interest created by perplexity, mental conflict, and situation." The tools he employed in psychological analysis were rather blunt; for example, he laid the background for Manfred's competing feelings of rage and compassion with reference to abstract forces:

*Manfred* was not one of those savage tyrants, who wanton in cruelty unprovoked. The circumstances of his fortune had given an asperity to his temper, which was naturally humane; and his virtues were always ready to operate, when his passions did not obscure his reason (p. 42).

Although such general terms were a common means of abbreviating more complex motives, Walpole, unlike many of his contemporaries, seemed content not to penetrate much further into the origins of malice and revenge--indeed, he established the precedent for later gothicists, that such dark forces should be made more and more mysterious. This relative superficiality, this reluctance to mull over causation and the minute sparks of feeling was convenient for Walpole, because it permitted him to make his figures from a very malleable substance, to put them through rapid changes from one mask to another, without elaborate preparations to make this seem plausible to the reader.

The characterization of Manfred again furnishes the best example of the advantages of such flexibility. While his wife, Hippolita, glosses over the fact that the giant apparition is real, Manfred is depicted as going through various mental states:

*Manfred*, though persuaded, like his wife, that the vision had been no work of fancy, recovered a little from the tempest of mind into which so many strange events had thrown
him. Ashamed too, of his inhuman treatment of a Princess, who returned every injury with new marks of tenderness and duty; he felt returning love forcing itself into his eyes—but not less ashamed of feeling remorse towards one, against whom he was inwardly meditating a yet more bitter outrage, he curbed the yearnings of his heart, and did not dare to lean even towards pity. The next transition of his soul was to exquisite villainy (pp. 48-49).

While the reader has the suggestion of a tempestuous mind, the minute features of Manfred's sufferings and anxieties remain unstudied. The shallowness of the psychological penetration guarantees that dialogue, like the characters' other actions, will stay at the level of gesture and exhibition, yielding few revelations about personality, emotion, or motivation. The unpredictability of the characters, however, lends them the illusion of texture; Walpole thus avoided the error which he complained of finding in Fanny Burney's *Cecilia*—that of "continually letting out" a character's "ruling passion." The fact that it seems normal, within the romance, for the characters to split off abruptly on some new course also excuses their apparently motiveless changes of heart, such as Manfred's eventual acquiescence in entering the neighbouring monastery, which otherwise would seem arbitrary and mechanical. However, since the motivational basis for Manfred's earlier malignity is so thinly defined, the basis for his repentance does not have to be any more substantial—not, at least, in order to be consistent.

While Walpole wrote as if psychological subtlety were an encumbrance, he was equally impatient with the accumulation of circumstantial details required by realistic narration. In this respect, his fiction, like the traditional ballads which began to reappear at this time, has its own austere economy of representation. He does not immerse the reader in
the associative richness, or the mysteriousness, or the exoticism of the setting *for its own sake*. Instead, the setting is instrumental in serving his more fundamental interests, and he uses it schematically, symbolically, and suggestively. These are all uses which tend to dispense with minute description and superficial, historical accuracy.

The encounters, discoveries, threats, captures, and escapes that make up the whole plot of *The Castle of Otranto* occur in a maze through which the main characters hurtle, drawing along the reader at the same precipitous speed, refusing him the chance to situate them within their environment, or even to realize that environment. For this reason, the Castle assumes a schematic, rather than a circumstantial, reality: it consists of the various routes the characters follow in their flights, pursuits, and fatal encounters. We become aware of its layout, of the subterranean passages that link it with the nearby places of refuge, of its galleries, chambers and corridors above ground, but this awareness provides little more than an outline, in which objects become incidental to the rapid action.

And as that action hurries toward its peak of violence and recognition, the *symbolic* use of the setting becomes more evident as well. The symbolism depends mainly on the intrusive element in the scene: the giant, whose armour and burgeoning limbs throw Manfred's household into chaos, by appearing with disturbingly appropriate frequency and effect. From the very opening incident, when the great plumed casque crushes out the life of Manfred's son and heir, Conrad ("a homely youth, sickly, and of no promising disposition"), on his wedding day, the giant apparition enters into a contest with Manfred for occupancy of the Castle and for
the power which it represents. The helmet deprives Manfred not only of his son but also of free use of the Castle. The enormous weight of the "enchanted casque" breaks through the courtyard floor into the vault below, enabling the "sorcerer" Theodore to escape captivity and to aid Isabella in her flight (pp. 37-40). When Manfred finally discovers him, Theodore points to the helmet as his "accomplice," in order to show the ridiculousness of the tyrant's accusations. But the connection between Theodore and the giant is more accurate than either he or Manfred supposes; for the armed figure is the most visible symbol of Theodore's legitimate claim to power, and of his true, noble lineage. As the figure grows beyond the capacity of the Castle, so Theodore's rights become obvious, beyond Manfred's capacity to deny them. The fact that the giant, once reassembled, turns out to be the venerable Alfonso's spiritual form clarifies the symbolic pattern, which is further extended when Manfred, seeing Theodore dressed in armour, mistakes him for Alfonso's ghost (pp. 106-7). As the giant enlarges, it helps to fulfil Manfred's family curse, which eventually destroys his children and revokes his power. It is appropriate that Alfonso should return in "dilated" scale, a change which indicates the vigor of his line (in contrast to Manfred's), the enormity of the crimes against him, the heavy burden of conscience upon Manfred, and the potency of the supernatural forces that guarantee justice in the mortal realm. Manfred's loss of control over the Castle, as well as the Castle's inability to contain the giant, proves the fragility of his system of self-deception; the Castle is as puny as Manfred's attempts to deny his inherited guilt or to avert his family's doom. The full extent of the symbolic pattern appears with the apotheosis of
Alfonso:

. . . a clap of thunder . . . shook the castle to its foundations; the earth rocked, and the clank of more than mortal armour was heard behind. Frederic and Jerome thought the last day was at hand. The latter, forcing Theodore along with them, rushed into the court. The moment Theodore appeared, the walls of the castle behind Manfred were thrown down with a mighty force, and the form of Alfonso, dilated to an immense magnitude, appeared in the center of the ruins. Behold in Theodore the true heir of Alfonso! said the vision: and having pronounced these words, accompanied by a clap of thunder, it ascended solemnly towards Heaven, where, the clouds parting asunder, the form of St. Nicholas was seen, and, receiving Alfonso's shade, they were soon wrapt from mortal eyes in a blaze of glory (pp. 144-45).

Having witnessed this baroque spectacle, Hippolita provides the proper, sententious interpretation of its symbols: "My Lord, said she, to the desponding Manfred, behold the vanity of human greatness! Conrad is gone! Matilda is no more! in Theodore we view the true Prince of Otranto" (p. 145). Here the symbolic value of the Castle is duly summarized. Although the modern reader might not have brought the same degree of moral seriousness to his interpretation, he still might have seen the significance of the Castle, not in terms of the "vanity of human greatness," but of the vanity of self-delusion. In any case, it is important to note that the Castle's symbolic function does not require that it be carefully described.

And exact description would have destroyed the suggestiveness of the setting, the vague sense that the Castle is an animate object as well as a symbolic one. In addition, the obscurity of the setting, which is a result of its hazy depiction, suggests the mystery which surrounds its inhabitants, a mystery which is fully explained only when Manfred and Jerome tell the true story of Alfonso and his descendants—and only after the Castle is ruined (pp. 146-48).
Since the schematic, symbolic, and suggestive uses of the setting do not need a supporting fabric of detail, Walpole's desire to indulge personal, gothic fantasies determines the choice of a setting more than its treatment. There is scarcely any sign in The Castle of Otranto of the plenitude of artifacts, decoration, familiar associations, of the delight in an historical period vividly imagined, that Walpole maintained so diligently at Strawberry Hill. He did not collect observations about costume, language, customs, or attitudes in The Castle of Otranto as he collected paintings, books, china, armour, and other items of virtù at Strawberry Hill. In architecture, Walpole's gothicism naturally took the form of a fascination with objects and their associations, but in fiction he was not similarly bound to use the evocative power of historical things. At Strawberry Hill the gothic veneer—the collection of recherché objects, the facile imitation of antiquity—was the whole gothic experience; in The Castle of Otranto, whatever attention was given to historical authenticity and description served a purpose beyond the mere evocation of ancient times. Walpole's claim that he was "retracing with . . . fidelity the manners of ancient days" must be studied with reference to his ultimate, actual subject—and that was not the "quality of life" or the "customs" of medieval men and women.

In Otranto exotic atmosphere is more important than historical accuracy. Although the plot might have been based, to some extent, on real events and persons, Walpole's efforts at lending an archaic flavour to the fiction were limited. He did try to affect a false medieval diction and vocabulary (using the older pronoun forms), and to introduce the terms of chivalry and feudalism, but there is such a thorough mixture of
elements and idioms that the result has no particular historical character, and cannot be identified with any period. Its main distinction is that it is antique and quaintly formal. Considering language only, we have the following specimen, spoken by Matilda to Theodore:

Stranger . . . if thy misfortunes have not been occasioned by thy own fault, and are within the compass of the Princess Hippolita's power to redress, I will take upon me to answer that she will be thy protectress. When thou art dismissed from this castle, repair to holy father Jerome, at the convent adjoining to the church of St. Nicholas, and make thy story known to him, as far as thou thinkest meet; he will not fail to inform the Princess, who is the mother of all that want her assistance (p. 56).

The importance of exoticism in the gothic novels will be discussed in detail in the next section of this study; here it is enough to observe two major factors. An exotic atmosphere was of prime importance in Otranto, in part because it gave the reader the superficial thrill of escape, but mainly because it granted a certain measure of thematic licence. When examining the translation device and Walpole's acceptance of the common critique of romances, I suggested the advantages of Walpole's ostensible self-censorship and of his allowance of two levels of interpretation for Otranto (pp. 98-100 supra). The reading which can accommodate all themes comfortably, by dismissing those which seem predictably barbarous, and therefore outlandish, complements the reading which seizes upon the same themes precisely because they are barbarous and dangerous. The net effect is that the fiction appears simultaneously safe, moderate, or conventional, and subversive, excessive, or strange. In both cases, exoticism, not historical scholarship, provoked the appropriate responses. For those readers who entertained a proper respect for their own time and a proper contempt for all others, the mere whiff of
the alien or the antique was sufficient to signal "barbarity." For those readers who saw in the exotic (whether historical or geographical) a respite from contemporary dullness, the goal was sensational novelty, not meticulous lessons in cultural history.

In the critical passage with which this section began, Sir Walter Scott would appear to overrate the historical fidelity of *The Castle of Otranto*, since, as I have argued above, it was hardly Walpole's object "to draw such a picture of domestic life and manners, during the feudal times, as might actually have existed." It would almost seem as if Scott had projected upon *Otranto* his own bias, for he himself preferred to display historical authenticity prominently in his fiction. In *Ivanhoe* (1819), for example, he took care to point out the differences in language and dress between the Anglo-Saxons and their Norman overlords, following the distinction through their oaths and vocabulary, their customs, political relations, national characteristics and religion. Scott certainly could not have found any similar depiction of the actual texture of the past in *The Castle of Otranto*, and his admiration for the romance appears misguided, until one notices that the eventual emphasis in Scott's critique of *Otranto* falls upon its excellence "in bringing forth the sensation of supernatural awe, connected with halls that have echoed to the sounds of remote generations," an excellence which he believed unattainable in new-gothic buildings. Scott correctly identified the true strength—and the true subject—of *The Castle of Otranto*, which gives it its own kind of authenticity: the evocation of an unfamiliar, but impressive, state of emotional arousal and irrational belief.
The striving for strong emotional effects, and for dramatic themes which might occasion such effects, determined many of the peculiar characteristics of *The Castle of Otranto*: its unusual literary models, for instance.

Given his interest in exploiting the display of strong emotions, it was natural that Walpole should turn for inspiration, guidance, and justification to a genre where excess of emotion and sentiment was a normal, conventional feature. Classical and Renaissance tragedy seemed the appropriate type. Thus, in the critical apparatus with which he surrounded *Otranto* Walpole liked to cite Shakespeare as his precedent and exemplar. He went so far as to revive the jaded dispute between French critics, who valued the Rules, and English poets, who valued their genius and liberty, in order to defend Shakespeare's work and connect it—in some obscure way—with his own. But this was only a pretended affinity, a way of placating respectable critical opinion and Walpole's own sense of literary tradition. In practice, his real models came from another source: the spectacular theatre of Webster and Ford, the theatre of revenge and dark villainy—the melodrama, not the tragedy. This sort of theatre had already put out roots in more recent times, reappearing in Otway's *Venice Preserved* (1682), for example.

The elements of spectacle—hyperbole, sentiments stretched to the extreme, irresistible cruel impulses—affected the dialogue in *Otranto*, and the whole method of dramatic presentation, structure, and characterization. The characters, particularly the noble or "high" characters, tend to speak and act as if they were constantly aware of an unseen audience, for whom they were playing the climax of a dramatic performance.
which consists of nothing but climaxes. Contrary to the purpose that Walpole stated in the second Preface, they do not "think, speak, and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions."

There are several reasons for this apparent discrepancy, aside from Walpole's desire for self-justification. First, and most important, is the matter of his innovative territory. Despite Walpole's careful exposition, in the second Preface, of his new fictional synthesis—an analysis which was so influential that Scott almost duplicated it sixty years later—the evidence of the romance itself shows what Scott also noticed: a stronger interest in "extraordinary positions" than in probability. The veneer of conventional elements—the familiar patterns of locution, the decorum and sentimentality of the sympathetic characters—made this interest somehow "safer," by qualifying it, but did not reduce the essential, attractive novelty of the "extraordinary situations."

Second, there is the matter of Otranto's relative value and its context. The deliberately cultivated strangeness of the gothic context explains the characters' artificiality. Since the situations into which they were cast were unusual, it was not to be expected that their probable behaviour would be the same as the probable behaviour of the "mere men and women" in ordinary, bourgeois, realistic fiction. On the other hand, the implied distinctions between the old romances and Walpole's new mixed mode in the second Preface signal a shift in the notion of probability, to make allowance for differences in theme and approach. Although the claim in the Translator's Preface that Otranto contained "no bombast, no similes, flowers, digressions, or unnecessary descrip-
tions" was untrue in all except the last item, Walpole did manage to avoid what he considered the major defect of previous "productions of romantic story": the invariable association of improbable events with "absurd dialogue" and absurd behaviour. He did not bring to his characterizations the psychological penetration of Richardson or the wide-ranging insight of Fielding, but he did introduce some sense of motivational and ethical patterns, of the interweaving of guilt and responsibility, a sense that he felt was badly lacking in the old romances. If the "actions, sentiments, and conversations" of Walpole's characters were not exactly natural, frequently anti-natural by the standards of the modern novel, they were at least more probable and less whimsical than those of the "heroes and heroines of ancient days," and as natural as might be expected in a strange realm of miracles and supernaturalism.

Moreover, the context of The Castle of Otranto was not only gothic and alien, but also tragic. At any rate, Walpole treated the romance as if it had been composed according to the principles of tragedy—as he understood them. The Translator's Preface invoked these by claiming "terror" as "the author's principal engine...so often contrasted by pity, that the mind is kept up in a constant vicissitude of interesting passions." Although these terms ("terror" and "pity") were dropped in the second Preface, in favour of the phrase "extraordinary positions," the same sense of high dramatic purpose remained to exercise an influence over criticism of the romance. For example, in defending his introduction of comic servants in Otranto, Walpole carefully distinguished between the chief qualities of the "high" and "low" characters: "the contrast between the sublime of the one and the naiveté of the other, sets the pathetic of
the former in a stronger light" (p. 15). The main characters' involvement with the sublime and the pathetic, or with the conventions of tragedy, implies that they are acting at a level of elevated feeling, sentiment and language; defining this context helps to excuse their frequently artificial, anti-natural speech and behaviour. Even if we substitute a more accurate identification of the generic affinities (i.e., "melodrama" instead of "tragedy"), we diminish the apparent artificiality somewhat when we see it against a conventional background that includes excessive emotion, heightened sensibility and sentimentality, and overblown rhetoric as standard features. As with the excuse provided by Otranto's alien setting, this means of redefining what is artificial or natural relies on the reader's expectations for various literary genres and types.

Having greatly reduced the psychological and descriptive aspects of the narrative, Walpole was left with two main areas for dramatic development: action and rhetoric. In both areas he managed to advance his interest in the excessive, the extraordinary, the sensational, and the sublime, while qualifying its extent and seriousness. He successfully imitated the pious Catholic propagandist or the medieval romancer, but retained the cooler critical intelligence and taste of the modern, genteel, Protestant skeptic.

The action of Otranto is centred on the downfall of Manfred's house and the catastrophic fulfilment of the prophetic curse against it. This basic plot line includes various subsidiary stories and problems: the extent and nature of Manfred's inherited guilt; the actual fate of Alfonso's descendants and the true familial connections among the charac-
ters; the romantic triangle of Theodore, Matilda and Isabella; and the fate of the loyal Hippolita. The reader's desire to discover the resolution of all these interwoven matters—even if the resolution be more or less mechanical—provides the impetus in *The Castle of Otranto*. Walpole depended upon this desire, and sought to make the reader conscious of it by occasionally frustrating it. This, he explained in the second Preface, was an advantage of the comic interludes:

The very impatience which a reader feels, while delayed, by the coarse pleasantries of vulgar actors, from arriving at the knowledge of the important catastrophe he expects, perhaps heightens, certainly proves that he has been artfully interested in, the depending event (p. 15).

One cannot reach that "depending event," however, until the characters have clashed with each other, pursued, captured, concealed, suspected, misunderstood, and discovered each other, and until they have unfolded the meaning of the events in which they are caught up.

The action is often punctuated by violence and spectacle. It opens with the death of Conrad under the gigantic helmet, and culminates with Manfred's blundering murder of his own daughter, Matilda, an act which, as Jerome observes with pious satisfaction, rounds out the cycle of blood vengeance:

Now, tyrant! behold the completion of woe fulfilled on thy impious and devoted head! The blood of Alfonso cried to Heaven for vengeance, and Heaven has permitted its altar to be polluted by assassination, that thou mightest shed thy own blood at the foot of that Prince's sepulchre! (p. 140).

The intervening events lay a marked stress upon violence or the threat of violence. Indeed, this seems to be a fictional world in which animosity and force control all relations among people. Theodore is
twice imprisoned—the first time, in a particularly bizarre fashion, under the helmet that killed Conrad, merely for daring to link Alfonso with the helmet. Manfred claps his chamber door shut against Matilda, crying: "Begone! I do not want a daughter" (p. 29). Theodore mistakenly fights with Frederic, the Marquis of Vicenza, his eventual father-in-law, and wounds him grievously. Isabella flees from the Castle not simply because the illicit and unnatural lechery of Manfred offends her delicate sensibility, but also because she has good reason to fear that he will extort her compliance (see pp. 30-33: "Heaven nor hell shall impede my designs! said Manfred, advancing again to seize the Princess"). Even the servant who brings Manfred the news of Conrad's death does not merely report, but comes "running back breathless, in a frantic manner, his eyes staring, and foaming at the mouth," whereupon Hippolita "without knowing what was the matter, but anxious for her son, swooned away" (p. 22).

Allied with the element of violence is Walpole's avid taste for the spectacular and the extraordinary, which permeates both incident and speech, consistently revealing the vast distance between the fictional world, with its dangerous, freely-indulged passions and its supernatural agents, and the normal, familiar world of repressed desire, commercial advantage, and dull, conventional religion, which only occasionally intrudes. The romance is crammed with ominous, ghostly visitors, with signs that comment upon, and magnify, the human concerns of the characters. The giant's casque is, of course, the first of these that we encounter, and its enormity does partially account for the panic that it inspires. Like all the other spectacular apparitions, it is awesome because its strangeness overwhelms the beholders. In addition, the
apparitions are all related in some way to the primary, ancient prophecy upon Manfred's family fortunes, which has declared "that the Castle and Lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it" (p. 22). Thus, when Manfred makes plain his designs upon Isabella, the plume of the great helmet waves significantly at window-level, and the portrait of his grandfather, which hangs in the gallery, puts on an even more astonishing performance:

At that instant, the portrait of his grandfather . . . uttered a deep sigh, and heaved its breast. . . . Manfred, distracted between the flight of Isabella, who had now reached the stairs, and yet unable to keep his eyes from the picture, which began to move, had, however, advanced some steps after her, still looking backwards on the portrait, when he saw it quit its panel, and descend on the floor, with a grave and melancholy air. Do I dream? cried Manfred, returning; or are the devils themselves in league against me? Speak, infernal spectre! or, if thou art my grandsire, why dost thou too conspire against thy wretched descendant, who too dearly pays for—e'er he could finish the sentence, the vision sighed again, and made a sign to Manfred to follow him. Lead on! cried Manfred, I will follow thee to the gulph of perdition! The spectre marched sedately, but dejected, to the end of the gallery, and turned into a chamber on the right-hand. Manfred accompanied him at a little distance, full of anxiety and horror, but resolved. As he would have entered the chamber, the door was clapped to with violence by an invisible hand (pp. 32-33).

If the sophisticated eighteenth-century reader did not entirely believe that the apparitions were real, he at least had the chance to discover what such a belief would have been like—and many readers were willing to be immersed in that receptive atmosphere, and deceived by it, temporarily. The success of the illusion results from Walpole's setting aside of rational explanations for the numerous strange and spectacular occurrences. Paradoxically, when natural causes are adduced for these occurrences, they seem less credible than supernatural ones. Having made allowance for the actual intervention of spirits in moral affairs, as the price of admission into the alien, fictional world, we come to
suspect that any character's attempt at rationality is self-delusion, especially since reactions and interpretations in *Otranto* typically rely upon faith, superstition, or passion, not intellect. At least, the prevalent attitudes of credulity and near-paranoia indicate that rational explanations for events should be taken ironically. Such is the case when, in Chapter III, Theodore, overcome with his passionate devotion to Matilda, exclaims: "from this moment, my injuries are buried deep in oblivion." As usual, the response of the spiritual forces, who are Theodore's guardians and monitors, is immediate: "A deep and hollow groan, which seemed to come from above, startled the Princess and Theodore. Good heaven! we are overheard! said the Princess. They listened, but perceiving no further noise, they both concluded it the effect of pent-up vapours" (p. 95). In the version of the gothic that, following Walpole's practice, did not permit the luxury of rational discourse for its characters, such a conclusion was a sign of naivété, innocence, or complacency, for the guiding principle was that all events are portentous.

Although the violent, spectacular elements in *Otranto* serve to reinforce both the favourable and the condescending images of its vaguely-defined, medieval, foreign setting (i.e., to evoke responses based on the two main kinds of gothicism; see above, pp. 62-68), there is yet another dimension to their importance. For violence and spectacle are the basic materials of Walpole's thematic and psychological preoccupation with unrestrained criminal or sentimental passions and their display through action and speech.

In the fictional environment of *The Castle of Otranto*, moderation is almost unknown. Yet, its absence—the preponderance of overblown rhetoric,
formulaic exchanges of insult or affection, exaggerated responses to events—is not simply a matter of literary mannerism. On the contrary, these excessive qualities are perfectly consistent with the motive forces within the romance, Manfred's *lust* and *greed*, which are, after all, sins of excess, of ambition or desire indulged immoderately. Whereas the action of *Otranto* mainly concerns the downfall of Manfred's household, the real centre of interest remains the *crime* which has brought about the downfall—the crime and its effects on both the criminal and his victims. During the course of the gothic novel's development, the focus of attention shifted progressively further and further from punishment and retribution toward the mysterious, fatally attractive, often noble character of the criminal himself.63

Excess, in its various forms and manifestations, is the endemic disease of *Otranto*, affecting all its social levels in some way. Manfred's servants appear by nature incapable of giving him a straight answer; they are stubbornly loquacious, refusing to tell a story or give a report in anything other than their own speed and fashion. They have not learned to discipline their tongues, their superstitious credulity, or their powers of observation, though in one scene Matilda's maid, Bianca, suggests that it is her superior who is deficient:

> A bystander often sees more of the game than those that play. . . . Does your highness think, madam, that his question about my Lady Isabella was the result of mere curiosity? No, no, madam; there is more in it than you great folks are aware of (pp. 57-8).

This example of impertinence follows immediately after another. An unseen speaker, who turns out to be Theodore, asks Matilda, after the exchange of appropriate courtesies, whether it is true, as he has heard
from the servants, that Isabella has fled from the Castle. Since the young man is supposed to be merely a peasant and Matilda's pious humility does not prevent her from paying strict attention to social distinctions, she replies disdainfully:

What imports it to thee to know? ... Thy first words bespoke a prudent and becoming gravity. Dost thou come hither to pry into the secrets of Manfred? Adieu. I have been mistaken in thee. Saying these words, she shut the casement hastily, without giving the young man time to reply (p. 57).

If Theodore's curiosity exceeds what is proper in his social station, Matilda's suspiciousness, apparently picked up from her father, exceeds necessary caution, temporarily keeping her from meeting, and aiding, Theodore.

When they finally do meet, and Matilda assists him in escaping the Castle, Walpole presents their parting in a delirium of sentiment and magnified gesture:

Go; heaven be thy guide!—and sometimes in thy prayers remember—Matilda! Theodore flung himself at her feet, and seizing her lily hand, which with struggles she suffered him to kiss, he vowed, on the earliest opportunity, to get himself knighted, and fervently entreated her permission to swear himself eternally her Knight.—Ere the Princess could reply, a clap of thunder was suddenly heard, that shook the battlements. Theodore, regardless of the tempest, would have urged his suit; but the Princess, dismayed, retreated hastily into the castle, and commanded the youth to be gone, with an air that would not be disobeyed. He sighed, and retired, but with eyes fixed on the gate, until Matilda, closing it, put an end to an interview, in which the hearts of both had drunk so deeply of a passion, which both now tasted for the first time (pp. 95-96).

Walpole, of course, was historian and genealogist enough to know that a young man, no matter how earnest, could not simply "get himself knighted" at will; presumably Theodore's peasant upbringing has left him ignorant of such matters. The point of his vows and declarations,
however, is to exhibit his greatness of spirit and his robust innocence. Here, as elsewhere in *The Castle of Otranto* (and as in Walpole's verse tragedy, *The Mysterious Mother*), there is not only flamboyant gesture, high sentiment, and intense passion, but also a self-conscious display, a parading of these dramatic colorations.

This sense of self-dramatization is activated with particular force in Matilda's death scene, much of which seems to be conceived as a succession of tableaux, each somehow more lurid than the preceding one. Thus, when Manfred stabs her, instead of Isabella, some of the monks nearby rush to aid "the afflicted Theodore" in trying to stanch her wound, while "the rest prevented Manfred from laying violent hands on himself" (p. 140). As Matilda is borne from the church back to the Castle, "Theodore supporting her head with his arm, and hanging over her in an agony of despairing love, still endeavoured to inspire her with hopes of life. Jerome, on the other side, comforted her with discourses of Heaven, and, holding a crucifix before her, which she bathed with innocent tears, prepared her for her passage to immortality. Manfred, plunged in the deepest affliction, followed the litter in despair" (p. 141). At the sight of "the afflicted procession" Hippolita is overcome by "the mightiness of her grief" and swoons. Matilda, who has already argued with her father over who should forgive whom, calls him to her side and "seizing his hand and her mother's, locked them in her own, and then clasped them to her heart. Manfred could not support this act of pathetic piety. He dashed himself on the ground, and cursed the day he was born" (p. 142). For fear of subjecting Matilda to an excess of passionate grief, Hippolita orders that he be taken to his chamber,
but she herself refuses to be separated from her daughter. Theodore wildly insists that Jerome marry him to Matilda, while there is still time, continuing his demands even when Frederic, prompted no doubt by his own claim upon Matilda, rebukes him: "Young man, thou art too unadvised. . . . Dost thou think we are to listen to thy fond transports in this hour of fate?" (p. 143). But we are to listen to them, for "fond transports" are the main material of which this scene is composed. When Matilda, at last, expires, in an atmosphere permeated with teary sentimentality, piety and forgiveness, the reactions are predictably and impressively violent: "Isabella and her women tore Hippolita from the corpse; but Theodore threatened destruction to all who attempted to remove him from it. He printed a thousand kisses on her clay-cold hands, and uttered every expression that despairing love could dictate" (p. 144).

It is appropriate that the love between Theodore and Matilda, having scarcely begun, should end in this embrace, with its hint of necrophilia; for the basic excesses in The Castle of Otranto are all sexual. Manfred's own crime, for which he is personally culpable, is his outrageous desire to use Isabella to perpetuate his line; since she has been entrusted to his guardianship, and has become a daughter in his household, this desire is something between a breach of hospitality and outright incest. In addition, it causes him to disregard the absurdity of the proposed match and Isabella's revulsion, and to cast off Hippolita, despite her faithfulness, simply because she is infertile. He is not alone in this lustful blindness; though Walpole does not emphasize the Marquis' degree of criminality, Frederic is quite willing, nevertheless, to exchange Isabella's happiness for his own sexual interest. He has fallen prey to
Manfred's scheme for winning consent to his plan, having developed a singleminded passion of his own—for Matilda. The daughters are almost sacrificed in this bargain, and Matilda is at last sacrificed outside it, while Isabella must settle for a love-by-proxy, sharing Theodore's grief for his dead, true lover. Even Matilda, whose abstinence becomes the subject of her maid's banter (pp. 51-53), speculates, on her deathbed, that her meeting with Theodore, breaking her vow never to see him again, "has drawn down this calamity" upon her (p. 144). Finally, the mystery surrounding Theodore's ancestry originates, we learn from Jerome, with Alfonso's wish to conceal his marriage to the "fair virgin . . . Victoria" which, though lawful, he deems "incongruous with the holy vow of arms by which he was bound" (p. 147). It is the fate of Theodore, like most "gothic" children, to be betrayed, denied or abandoned by his parents, only to discover his identity much later in life; but the whole pattern is governed by sexual error.

Walpole's interests in erotic impulses, the spectacular results of crime, and magnificently excessive gesture and speech, coupled with his casual attitude toward punishment, were not liable to please the next major writer of new-gothic fiction, Clara Reeve. In the preface to her romance, The Old English Baron (1778), she stated that her idea of the gothic novel was the same as Walpole's, but that his example had shown her certain faults which she had attempted to avoid. Reeve listed the requirements for excellence in the gothic novel: "a sufficient degree of the marvellous, to excite the attention; enough of the manners of real life, to give an air of probability to the work; and enough of the pathetic, to engage the heart in its behalf." While agreeing that The
Castle of Otranto fulfilled the last two requirements, Reeve claimed that it suffered from a "redundancy" in the first. She complained that, in Otranto, "the machinery is so violent, that it destroys the effect it is intended to excite. Had the story been kept within the utmost verge of probability, the effect had been preserved, without losing the least circumstance that excites or detains the attention." Reeve listed various excesses of "the marvellous" in Otranto, and tried to account for their adverse influence: "when your expectation is wound up to the highest pitch, these circumstances take it down with a witness, destroy the work of imagination, and, instead of attention, excite laughter" (p. 5). Whereas Reeve thought that she had perfected the formula that Walpole had been able to follow only clumsily, Walpole was not convinced by her evidence. He wrote to Cole, on 22 August 1778, that The Old English Baron was "a professed imitation of mine, only stripped of the marvellous, and so entirely stripped, except in one awkward attempt at a ghost or two, that it is the most insipid dull nothing you can read. It certainly does not make me laugh: for what makes one doze, seldom makes one merry." In a similar vein, he remarked:

I cannot compliment The Old English Baron. It was totally void of imagination and interest; had scarce any incidents; and though it condemned the marvellous admitted a ghost. I suppose the author thought a tame ghost might come within the laws of probability.65

Although controversy over the relative merit of the two works continued, as subsequent critics tried to define the true gothic method, it is also important to note a point of agreement between Walpole and Reeve: in her preface to The Old English Baron, at least, Reeve admitted that the gothic romance should be entertaining and emotionally involving, as well
as probable.

In her later, full critical work, *The Progress of Romance* (1785), Reeve avoided controversial judgments by choosing not to discuss any works published after 1770. Because she simply let her previous treatment of *The Castle of Otranto* stand unchanged, *The Progress of Romance* contains no reaction to gothic fiction as such, although she did offer praise to Thomas Leland's *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury* (1762), mainly for its accurate depiction of chivalric manners and for its avoidance of violence and supernaturalism. Even *The Old English Baron* escaped comment, though modesty had not stopped her from having her fictional disputants admire her own translation of Barclay's *Argenis* (*The Phoenix*, 1772).

It was unlikely, at any rate, that Reeve would have been willing to treat the gothic as a significantly new, separate phenomenon, for her chief purpose, in *The Progress of Romance*, was to rescue the romance, of which the gothic was merely a sub-type, from its dangerous position on the periphery of decorum and moral seriousness. She sought to place it within the legitimate literary tradition, to counteract the common innuendo to the effect that it was a sub-literary form, suitable only for a barbarous people or an unwisely governed nursery. Her definitions of terms were sometimes self-contradictory, but her basic method was clear enough. Like Walpole, she argued for the legitimacy of a taste somewhat beyond the conventional by connecting a disreputable with a reputable genre. Just as Walpole had conceived of *The Castle of Otranto* in tragic terms, so Reeve traced the origins of the romance to the epic and demonstrated their formal and thematic correspondences.
While believing that new romances could be made compatible with the taste of modern readers, Reeve was more concerned with the readers' moral welfare. Consequently, she felt obliged to show that romances could have the same degree of moral seriousness or educative value that was assigned customarily to the epic or chronicle--or at least, that they could be relatively harmless.

Within the dialogue format of The Progress of Romance, Hortensio, the disputant least convinced of the romances' value, subscribes to a severe doctrine: there are no gradations of quality in fiction; all fiction is morally indefensible, because it purveys lies and seductive half-truths, under the guise of entertainment. Although this hysterical view was already fading from the periodical reviews, it was also gaining support among Methodists and Evangelicals, who added to their indictment a distaste for fiction's strictly materialistic outlook. What is most interesting, however, for an understanding of Clara Reeve's own practice as a writer, is the outcome of the moral aspect of the argument. Hortensio's friendly opponents finally lead him to ease his outright ban against fiction, but not without sharing his condescending attitude toward children and members of the "lower orders," whose intellectual capacities and moral tendencies did not enable them to choose what was fit to read.

It would appear that, between the writing of the preface to The Old English Baron and the writing of The Progress of Romance, Clara Reeve had lost most of her earlier, minimal interest in "the marvellous" and had become more willing to make concessions to the moralists. Her idea of accommodating the romance to modern tastes was to strike a balance
between its sheer entertainment value and some (fabricated) serious pur-
pose. But in The Old English Baron itself we can see the increasing
importance of conventional, bourgeois moralism in determining the themes
of the gothic novel and their treatment.

The motto of The Old English Baron, underscored repeatedly by the
more self-righteous characters and the narrator, is the omnipotence of
the "over-ruling hand of Providence" and the "certainty of RETRIBUTION."
Although the ostensible setting for the novel (during "the minority of
Henry the Sixth, King of England") makes the characters' belief in such
divine intervention seem plausible, this recurrent emphasis upon faith
and piety is misleading, as an indicator of the novel's significance; for
purely human actions and concerns control its outcome and mark the limits
of its religiosity. The actual attitude toward piety is not the overt
one: ultimately it is shown to be a natural accompaniment to material
goods, possessed by those who deserve them—a luxury afforded by security
and seasoned with complacency. In the scheme of power and interests that
dominates the narrator's attention, prayer and moral persuasion are
admirable, but secondary, instruments, and any idea of higher justice
becomes inextricably confused with commercial advantage. Litigation,
negotiation, calculation, and force of arms are the serviceable tools
that bring the criminal to punishment, arrange the exceedingly happy fate
of the principals, and confer a just settlement upon the deserving
(strictly according to rank). Providence and retribution are earthly,
direct, nonmysterious, and essentially rational.

For the exotic, passionate, sometimes ludicrous forces with which
Walpole had imbued The Castle of Otranto, Reeve substituted the canny
play of modern commercial instincts. This substitution shows nowhere more clearly than in the consistent flattening of potentially romantic elements in *The Old English Baron*, and of those the issue of courtship and marriage is the most noticeably affected.

Courtship here involves repressing or concealing passion, while proving to the bride's family one's solvency and rank. Marriage likewise is more a matter of economic than romantic or erotic attachment, although the contrary notion occasionally, and briefly, appears for the sake of sentimental interest. But in such matters Edmund is, above all else, the prudent hero. In compliance with the commercial mores, he postpones declaring his own real affection for Lady Emma until he has settled the question of his birth and estate. For this he is later admired; however, as a result, he must resort to indirection in wooing her, by describing his own plight as if it were a friend's:

> My friend is so particularly circumstanced that he cannot at present with propriety ask for Lady Emma's favour; but as soon as he has gained a cause that is yet in suspense, he will openly declare his pretensions, and if he is unsuccessful he will then condemn himself to eternal silence.

> ... His birth is noble, his degree and fortune uncertain.

> ... It is utterly impossible ... for any man of inferior degree to aspire to Lady Emma's favour; her noble birth, the dignity of her beauty and virtues, must awe and keep at their proper distance, all men of inferior degree and merit; they may admire, they may revere; but they must not presume to approach too near, lest their presumption should meet with its punishment (p. 68).

Reeve makes this discretion seem both comic and masochistic, for Emma, playing upon Edmund's temporary disability, succeeds in humiliating him with questions and jibes, while amusing herself (pp. 66-69).

The anti-romantic version of courtship and marriage, as transaction and prize, persists in the actual wedding negotiations. In the midst of
celebrations over Edmund's good fortune, Baron Fitz-Owen suggests that he and Edmund "retire from this crowd" for they have "business of a more private nature to transact" (p. 142). That business is, of course, the marriage agreement, and the following scene, in which Emma is asked to lend her approval to the match, clearly exhibits the contrast between passion and business upon which the very technique of the novel is based. Emma approaches her father, "with tears on her cheek, sweetly blushing like the damask rose." Baron Fitz-Owen explains to her his need for her consent:

I have promised to all this company to give you to him; but upon condition that you approve him: I think him worthy of you; and, whether you accept him or not, he shall ever be to me a son; but Heaven forbid that I should compel my child to give her hand where she cannot bestow her heart (p. 143).

Emma's reply emphasizes the fitness of her relationship with her father, her obedience and propriety; it is rather self-congratulatory, but dwells very little upon the condition of her heart except in an almost legalistic way. Such emotional spectacle as there is, is abruptly curtailed, and summarized by the narrator:

A fresh scene of congratulation ensued; and the hearts of all the auditors were too much engaged to be able soon to return to the ease and tranquillity of common life (p. 144).

It is this idea of a "common life" that distinguishes so sharply between the gothicism of Walpole and that of Clara Reeve. Whereas in The Castle of Otranto the characters, living constantly on the edge of crisis, never enjoy anything resembling "ease and tranquillity"—except, perhaps, through death or seclusion from the world—the attainment of such peace and security is the chief goal, and the common lot, of Reeve's
characters. The narrator of *The Old English Baron* scrupulously records not only the major alliance between Edmund and Emma, but also the lesser alliances, among the various sons and daughters of the lords who have brought Walter Lovel to justice and Edmund to his rightful position. Reeve is evidently most comfortable when dealing with the equitable exchange of property, or with the private, discreet, bloodless punishment of the murderer, or with the elaborate calculus needed to compute the cash-value of Edmund's noble upbringing. She is least comfortable, and capable, when dealing with the spectacular, the supernatural, the excessive, the violent—anything that distracts her from a certain ideal transformation of the past. Unlike Walpole, she has no relish for extravagant display of strong scenes, nor for close scrutiny of the criminal psyche. Even the sentimentality which helps to nourish the reader's imagination through more sterile, business-like passages, she governs with the strict rule of decorum.

Reeve's preoccupation with normalcy accounts for several strikingly non-romantic features of *The Old English Baron*. The narration of the combat between Sir Philip Harclay and Walter Lovel, for example, seems mild and colourless, small compensation for the intricate legal and emotional preparations for it (pp. 100-101). The episode in which Walter Lovel tries to escape from his captors is similarly abridged (p. 134), so as to add to the general impression that he makes a mediocre criminal. Reeve consistently avoids using suspenseful devices, which might arouse the reader to a state of tense alertness. Finally, "ease and tranquility" give the moral theme to the prolonged coda that follows the circumstances of the main characters and their descendants into the third
Sir Walter Scott attempted to explain these features, which he regarded as signs of the failure of her imagination, through the limitations of Clara Reeve's life. "In her secluded situation, and with acquaintance of events and characters derived from books alone," he argued, she could not avoid following "a certain creeping and low line of narrative and sentiment." Isolated from the great world of masculine activity, she had to resort to "prolix, minute and unnecessary details" which at least offered "a secret mode of securing a certain necessary degree of credulity from the hearers of a ghost-story."\(^71\)

While this is a valid, useful explanation, it is incomplete; for it misses the real sense in which Reeve's limited thematic and emotional range was an advantage. Her details may have been prolix and minute, but were rarely unnecessary, since they not only secured her story's credibility (scarcely in danger) but also clearly associated its supposed historical setting with a whole set of familiar bourgeois values, by evoking the texture of late-eighteenth-century ethical and practical life.

For Reeve, unlike Walpole, the historical setting was not a theatrical setting, where excessive, strange passions and behaviour might be indulged with exceptional fictional licence, under the supervening protection of apparently conventional prejudices. For Reeve, the controlling metaphor for romance was more likely the classroom than the theatre. I have already noted how Reeve's didactic preoccupation increased between The Old English Baron and The Progress of Romance (see pp. 132-136 above); in a still later work, her Memoirs of Sir Roger de
Clarendon (1793) both the didacticism and its effect on the treatment of historical subjects are plain. In the Memoirs Reeve turned away entirely from the purposes and techniques of gothic fiction in order to use history as a source of ethical education:

She saw in the fourteenth century the heroic days of pristine morality, and as such she described them, to rebuke her own degenerate age, to stimulate its ideals and to counteract the debilitating influence of pessimists and levellers.72

Even in the earlier work, however, the historical setting was, in effect, non-historical. Inasmuch as history yielded up exotic, strange, exciting, or forbidden images, it was harmful—at best trivial. Reeve's view of gothic life was confined to models of superior conduct, to the ethical excellence of the putative gothic ancestors. In The Old English Baron, consequently, there is room neither for chauvinistic invocations of Old England (despite the title), nor for speculative interweavings of history and fiction (as in Sophia Lee's The Recess), nor for contemptuous dismissal of vicious anachronisms. Instead, Reeve's historical setting is a relatively neutral territory where the victory of positive ethical forces may be enacted. Thus, in The Old English Baron history was idealized, paradoxically, by being made recognizable, and, in that sense, realistic; it was transformed into an extension, or a moralist's dream, of the present.

This conjunction of bourgeois aspirations and historical isolation produces, not surprisingly, certain exemplars of the "pristine morality." Such is the old retainer Joseph's description of the elevation of Edmund into his new position:
He closed the tale with praise to Heaven for the happy discovery, that gave such an heir to the house of Lovel; to his dependants such a Lord and Master; to mankind a friend and benefactor. There was truly a house of joy; not that false kind, in the midst of which there is heaviness, but that of rational creatures grateful to the supreme benefactor, raising their minds by a due enjoyment of earthly blessings to a more perfect state hereafter (p. 150).

The "house of joy" is the exact opposite of Manfred's Castle, just as the gothic method and sense of history that it reflects are the opposite of Walpole's. This we can tell even from such key words as this brief, pious account gives us: rational, grateful, enjoyment. Rationality, gratitude, and enjoyment (especially of "earthly blessings") are alien factors in *The Castle of Otranto*, where they all would detract from the romance's sheer impressiveness and from its emphasis on depravity and fatality. This is a matter of historical perspective as much as technique. *Otranto* evokes the (not very specific) fictional realm that corresponds to the enlightened, condescending eighteenth-century view of the Middle Ages that was outlined in the first part of this study (see pp. 65-68 above). Though cursorily, Walpole touches upon all the important elements of that image: devious priests, tyranny, superstition, excessive power, ignorance, and barbarous behaviour. The manner of narration becomes part of the matter narrated, for the novel stands at two removes from the reader: it is the work both of Walpole, the modern skeptic and dilettante, and of his fictitious Counter-Reformation propagandist. Walpole succeeds in balancing critical and imaginative responses to *Otranto*, by playing the reader's sense that the gothic is impressive, spectacular, or delightfully disturbing, against his sense that it cannot be admirable, politically. But the former sense is insinuated despite the latter.
Reeve's treatment of the historical setting is much less complicated; it illustrates a variant of that kind of gothicism which I have called elegiac or utopian (see p. 62 above). She does not recognize any vicious or contemptible features in gothic life—as she conceives of it. The alleged barbarity of the gothic holds no appeal for her, either as a source of unaccustomed, primitive excitement or as an object of derision and wonderment mixed. The unrepentant malice of Walter Lovel, for example, and the juvenile spitefulness of such unsavoury followers as Wenlock and Markham, are not supposed to be typical of some darker aspect of gothic behaviour. These are mere intrusions. Moreover, Reeve does not try to make perversity or malevolence interesting, as Walpole at least starts to do with Manfred in *Otranto*. In contrast, Walter Lovel, having "entered into the service of the Greek emperor, John Paleologus," becomes moderately successful and respectable, in exile in the dying empire (p. 153).

Reeve discovers, however, no inherent advantages in gothic life, beyond its convenient neutrality and its ancestral overtones, which facilitate her educative purposes. The lives of her gothic characters are indistinguishable from purified, simplified modern lives; they are no more particularized in their common setting than in their personalities. In her adaptation of historical materials to serve as templates for didactic tools, Reeve shows a significant impulse in late-eighteenth-century gothicism: the origin of elegiac gothic in bourgeois complacency and moralism, rather than radical disillusionment.

In thus transforming the age of the gothic ancestors, it is obvious that Clara Reeve had little use, or tolerance, for sensationalism or exoticism, for she did not read these as primary qualities in history.
In addition, as her discussion in *The Progress of Romance* shows, these were qualities which embarrassed her when she came to defend the old and new romances: they were likewise not primary qualities in literature. In examining gothic fiction and related critical writings we will find a constant tension between the elegiac mode—particularly Reeve's variety—and the darker, ambivalent mode, which exploits the otherness of the gothic. We will also find that this tension is often expressed through the presence or absence of sensational and exotic elements in the novels, and through attitudes towards sensationalism and exoticism in theoretical works.


5 Walpole to Horace Mann, 5 June 1747 OS, *Corr.*, 19, 414; see also Selected Letters, pp. 43-46 (Walpole to Mann, 12 June 1753).

6 Walpole to Henry Seymour Conway, 8 June 1747, *SL*, p. 22.

7 Ibid., pp. 23-24.

8 Walpole, *Description*, p. 1, asterisked note.


10 The "Quadruple Alliance" consisted of Walpole, Thomas Gray, Richard West, and Thomas Ashton. See Lewis, pp. 46-47.


14 Among the friends were John Chute and Richard Bentley who made up, with Walpole, the "Committee of Taste at Strawberry Hill." Chute and Walpole dominated the trio--Chute as architect, Walpole as antiquary--for Bentley, the draughtsman, was conveniently out of sight in Jersey until 1761. When he came to live with Walpole they quarreled and ended the relationship. (See Lewis, "Genesis," p. 64.) Mann, Montagu and Mason also contributed advice. James Essex designed the Beaucherc Tower and the New Offices, and probably exerted some influence on Walpole's choice of styles, drawing him away from his early preference for the Perpendicular gothic. Essex died before the Offices were built, and James Wyatt executed them.
15. Walpole, *Description*, p. iii.

16. Ibid., pp. iii-iv.

17. Ibid., p. iv.


19. Ibid., pp. 36-39.

20. Walpole, *Description*, p. 55. See Agnes Addison, *Romanticism and the Gothic Revival* (1938; reprint, New York: Gordian Press, 1967), p. 41: "the post-Viollet-le-Duc mediaevalists shuddered when they found buildings which pretended to be in the Gothic manner and yet were not stone vaulted, but were constructed in the simplest manner like a cardboard box and then plastered over with pinnacles and crockets and a few pointed arches." Michael Sadleir, "'All Horrid?' Jane Austen and the Gothic Romance," in *Things Past* (London: Constable, 1944), relates the architectural and the literary superimpositions of exotic elements upon a familiar base: "the sound of a strange language allured the ear, but its grammar (and indeed much of its meaning) were ignored" (p. 178).


22. Lewis, "Genesis," p. 83. Walpole wrote to Thomas Barret (5 June 1788): "... neither Mr. Bentley nor my workmen had studied the science, and I was always too desultory and impatient to consider that I should please myself more by allowing time, than by hurrying my plans into expectation before they were ripe. My house therefore is but a sketch by beginners."

23. Walpole, *Description*, p. 47.

24. Walpole to Mann, *Selected Letters*, p. 44.


26. For plans see Walpole, *Aedes Walpolianae* (1747), reprinted in *Works* (1798); plans for Strawberry Hill appeared in the *Description* and are reproduced in Lewis, *Horace Walpole*.

27. Walpole wrote to Mann (12 June 1753): "This view of the castle is what I have just finished, and is the only side that will be at all regular" (*SL*, p. 43). This would suggest that Walpole had a particular external effect in mind even at this early stage.
Ibid., p. 45: ". . . it is really incredible how small most of the rooms are. The only two good chambers I shall have, are not yet built; they will be an eating-room and a library, each 20 by 30, and the latter 15 feet high." W. S. Lewis associates the increase in room size with Walpole's "larger income and expanding knowledge" of the gothic, after 1762. See Preface to Correspondence with Cole, p. xxxii.

29 Allen, Tides in English Taste, II, p. 75.

30 Walpole to Mann, SL, pp. 43-45; Walpole to Montagu, Corr., 9, 102.

31 Sir Terry Robsart, according to Walpole, was "an ancestor of Sir R.W. [Robert Walpole], who was Knight of the Garter." (Lewis, Horace Walpole, pp. 104-105, quoting Walpole's note to his letter to Mann, 12 June 1753.) Sir Terry symbolized Walpole's romantic and noble ancestry.

32 Walpole to George Montagu, Corr., 10, 192.

33 Walpole to Deffand, quoted in Scott, "Life of Walpole," On Novelists and Fiction, p. 86.


35 Clark, Gothic Revival, pp. 81-82; Agnes Addison, p. 42.

36 Walpole to Richard Bentley, Selected Letters, p. 48. For an account of Miller's works, see Eastlake, pp. 41-43 (Introduction).

37 Clark, p. 35, pp. 41-42.

38 Walpole to Cole, 9 March 1765, Corr., 1, 88.

39 The armour had belonged to King Francis I of France, and Walpole bought it in 1772, after his dream. See Walpole, Description, p. 31 and figure opposite.

40 Ibid., p. 32.

41 Walpole to Cole, 9 March 1765; Walpole repeated the story to Mason, in briefer form, without mentioning the details of the dream. He continued to claim that the writing took two months, adding that he had decided
to publish his work only after Gray encouraged him (Walpole to Mason, 17 April 1765, Corr., 28, 7). In the Walpoliana is the conflicting claim that he "wrote the 'Castle of Otranto' in eight days, or rather eight nights" (Walpoliana, 2nd edn., London: for R. Philips, 1804, I, 22). The conflict probably arises from the difference between the time necessary for a first draft versus that for a completed draft. "HW showed the MS to Gray in August [1764], and Gray encouraged HW to print it. . . . 'At first it was universally believed to be Mr. Gray's' (HW to Hertford, 26 March 1765)." (Corr., 14, 137, editor's note 1.)

42 The publisher's imprint for the first edition reads: "LONDON: Printed for Tho. Lownds in Fleet-Street, MDCCCLXV," but Montague Summers records the actual date of publication as 24 December 1764. See Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto and The Mysterious Mother, ed. Montague Summers (London: Constable & Co., 1924), p. xxv. Summers' edition combines the various editions published under Walpole's supervision. Subsequent page references will appear within text, and will be to this edition. In the first edition (1764), the romance is subtitled "A Story"; in the Works (1798) it appeared as "A Gothic Story." Sir Walter Scott, in his "Life of Walpole," pointed out that "Onuphrio Muralto" was "a sort of anagram, or translation, of the author's own name"--and, I would add, a deliberately transparent one. (See Scott, p. 85.)

43 Gray to Walpole, 30 December 1764, Corr., 14, 137.

44 Although it was a friendly detachment, Gray's report was lighter and less enthusiastic than it would have been had he been more of a flatterer. Walpole had also sent copies of the romance to other friends: Elie de Beaumont, Hertford, Montagu, Cole, Thomas Warton, and Mason.

45 Mason to Walpole, 14 April 1765, Corr., 28, 5-6. The "episcopal evidence" is supposed to be from William Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester (p. 5, n. 2). Mason here notes in passing one of Walpole's other precautions, that of committing his MS to another printer rather than issuing it through the Strawberry Hill Press. Apparently the hoax had some enduring appeal, for Peter Burra attests: "I have seen a publisher's catalogue which as late as 1801 advertised The Castle of Otranto as by Muralto, although Walpole had admitted his authorship in 1765," a deception which he attributes to the usefulness of such "non-existent creatures" in making "the productions seem more strange." ("Baroque and Gothic Sentimentalism," Farrago, 3 [Oct. 1930], 168.)


47 Walpole to Mason, 17 April 1765, *Corr.*, 28, 6-7. The second edition of *Otranto*, bearing Walpole's name as author, appeared 11 April 1765 (see Summers, p. xxvi).


49 K. K. Mehrotra, in *Horace Walpole and the English Novel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1934; reprinted New York: Russell & Russell, 1970), and J. M. S. Tompkins, in *The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800* (London: Constable & Co., 1932) provide ample evidence from contemporary periodical reviews, of the moral scrutiny that was applied to novels and novelists in general. Anyone without Walpole's status might have had to worry about writing a novel with such unconvincing moral sentiments and such interesting evilness. On the other hand, Tompkins notes that the "didactic prepossession" applied most often to mediocre novels (of which there were many) without redeeming qualities. Excellent moral principles, however, were not enough to excuse a lack of entertainment, and Tompkins finds evidence of a declining devotion to the didactic standards towards the 1770's (p. 72; see Ch. III "Didacticism and Sensibility," p. 70 ff.).

50 Mehrotra, pp. 22-37. Also see J. B. Heidler, *The History, from 1700-1800, of English Criticism of Prose Fiction* (Univ. of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, 12, 2 [May 1928]), pp. 134-135; and Malcolm Ware, *Sublimity in the Novels of Ann Radcliffe* (Essays and Studies on English Language and Literature, Upsala Univ. English Instit., XXV; Lund: Carl Blom, 1963), p. 13. The reception for *Otranto* in France was generally as cool as Mme du Deffand's. Harold Streeter noted that "it does not seem to have excited much comment in France despite its author's social prestige. The *Mercure de France* noted it indifferently as a novel 'qui nous a paru propre à faire passer agréablement quelques heures de loisir.' Grimm regarded with approval this 'série d'apparitions surnaturelles réunies sous la forme la plus agréable qu'on puisse voir.'" (The *Eighteenth Century English Novel in French Translation* [New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1970; Doctoral dissertation, Columbia Univ., 1936], pp. 117-118.)

51 Mehrotra is suspicious of this explanation, preferring the shorter section of the Translator's Preface that is not taken up with the translation device: "Here he is not puffed up with his success, propounding inflated theories, or manipulating motives to place his tale in the best light possible" (Mehrotra, pp. 10-11). Mehrotra is too generous to the first Preface, too harsh toward the second. Although he could not have
anticipated all the attacks which would be made upon his work when he wrote the first, Walpole also used this opportunity to put it "in the best light possible." In addition, however unrelated his theories may be to his actual achievement, they exerted a strong influence, nevertheless, upon later critics' (e.g. Scott's, the Aikins') views on Otranto and the gothic genre.


53 Lévy, Le Roman <<Gothique>>, pp. 47-53.

54 For Walpole's criticism of the dullness of Richardson, see Heidler, p. 131.

55 Walpoliana, I, 46-47.

56 Ibid., p. 39.

57 Montague Summers, The Gothic Quest (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 184. Summers notes several parallels between the infamous career of the fictional Manfred and that of Manfred or Manfroi, "a natural son of the Emperor Frederick II." The parallels include usurpation and the mysterious disappearance of a rightful heir, but Summers remains relatively unmoved by them; moreover, he does not provide any evidence that Walpole knew about the historical Manfred, or had him in mind when he composed The Castle of Otranto.

58 In Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley, Evans notes that "Otranto and the genre it initiated erupted from two related ideas: first, medieval life was dark, gloomy, and barbarous; second, it would be terrifying if enlightened gentlemen and 'sensible' ladies were transported from contemporary society and suddenly thrust into that earlier time" (p. 8). The first idea was a source of reassurance, the second, of excitement and imaginative stimulation.


60 See Walpole's argument against Voltaire, Otranto, pp. 15-20.

61 Clara McIntyre, "Were the Gothic Novels Gothic?" PMLA, 36 (1921), 644-667; Ann Radcliffe in Relation to Her Time (New Haven: Yale Studies in English, 1920); "The Later Career of the Elizabethan Villain Hero," PMLA, 40 (1925), 874-880. McIntyre argues that the label gothic was misapplied to the novels, most of whose fantasies were not at all located in the Middle Ages, but in "the artificial period constructed by Elizabethan dramatists out of Renaissance Italy" (PMLA, 36, 666). Evans argues that the influence upon the gothic both of the Elizabethan stage and of Richardsonian sensibility was merely accretive, since both were chosen only because they offered appropriate materials for the larger
gothic plan. Masao Miyoshi treats the connection between the Eliza-
abethan and the gothic hero in *The Divided Self* (New York: NYU Press,
1969), pp. 7-8, suggesting the uniqueness of the gothic variety. Other
critics who have resisted an influence-based theory, in favour of a
gothic "core" have included Eino Railo, in *The Haunted Castle* (London:
Geo. Routledge, 1927), Edith Birkhead, in *The Tale of Terror* (London:
Constable, 1921) and Varma, to some extent, in *The Gothic Flame*.

For evidence of Walpole's dramatic impulses, I would cite his own
*The Mysterious Mother* (1768; 1778) and Jephson's stage adaptation of
*Otranto*, *The Count of Narbonne* (1780), over which Walpole exercised some
rights of supervision (*Otranto*, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii). Examination of Wal­
pole's defence of his own, unacted play shows the extent to which he
believed that he had cast it in tragic form (see *Otranto*, pp. 253-260,
272-277). For the history of *Otranto* on stage, and its relationship to
the tragic or melodramatic modes, see Evans, pp. 52-53; *Otranto*, p.xxiii ff;
W. H. Smith, pp. 228-240; and Willard Thorp, "The Stage Adventures of
Some Gothic Novels," *PMLA*, 43 (1928), 476-478. In a note in his 1777
edition of Pope's *Works*, Bishop Warburton praises the gothic romance, and
specifically *Otranto*, for conformity to the aims of classical tragedy, to
the Aristotelian concept of catharsis, which Walpole himself had invoked
in his Translator's Preface. This line of criticism, however, remained
undeveloped, either for support or attack. See Arthur L. Cooke, "Some
Side Lights on the Theory of the Gothic Romance," *MLQ*, 12 (1951), 430
and n. 4.

Evans, pp. 81-89; Evans relates the transformation of the gothic
villain to the disintegration of the gothic hero (pp. 56-59).

Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron* (London: Oxford Univ. Press,
1967), p. 4. Another form of the work appeared anonymously under the
title *The Champion of Virtue* (1777), but this version was less well-
known. Further references will be indicated within the text.

Quoted in Summers edn. of *Otranto*, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance* (Colchester: 1785; reprint,

Reeve's mouthpiece, Euphrasia, begins the discussion by trying to
make certain key distinctions. She divides the novel from the romance,
tracing the origin and technique of each to a corresponding established
form—history and epic, respectively. But the clarity breaks down.
After declaring that "romances, have been written, both in prose and
verse," Euphrasia also states that "a Romance, is nothing but an Epic in
prose" (p. 51). Her chronological division of romances into "ancient,"
"old," and "modern" is further distracting.
Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, pp. 70-72: "in 1770 the Critical found itself unable to follow Bancroft in his logical contention that, since the main business of a novel is to teach, it had better not be too interesting," and the *Monthly* remarks in a review of 1772: "'The excellent lessons of morality which this work inculcates will not be able to save it from oblivion'" (p. 72).


Typical of this restraint is the sequel to Emma's learning that Edmund is also "the man in whose behalf I once presumed to speak," that his fortune and lineage might permit them to marry: "From this period, the young pair behaved with solemn respect to each other, but with apparent reserve" (p. 134). When Sir Robert, "with tears on his cheeks" and filial obedience on his lips, seeks reconciliation with his father, the witnesses to the scene respond mildly, impersonally, decorously, as if to a dramatic piece: "The company rose, and congratulated both father and son" (p. 139). Sir Robert is promptly matched with Lord Clifford's daughter.


Miss Reeve . . . hoped her narrative would stimulate a few readers to imitate the virtues of olden days, and would convince them that the new ideas of the French Revolutionists were not as well founded as many people believed. Thus she attempted to convert the Gothic romance into a weapon of propaganda against the doctrines of the French Revolution and to make it the conservative and romantic counterpart of the contemporary, realistic novel of purpose, which was being currently used to propagandize the new radical ideas. The lead was not followed, Cooke claims, because "the romance writers of the 1790's were more interested in terrifying their readers than in glorifying the old order of things." I do not believe that these two purposes are necessarily distinct.

This tension evidently affected Clara Reeve herself. In *The English Novel* (London: Constable, 1960), Lionel Stevenson notes that Reeve's next novel, *The Exiles, or Memoirs of Count de Cronstadt*, "departed from the placidity of her *Old English Baron* in favour of emotional despair and terrifying perils" (p. 163). This was not, however, her ultimate technical or critical preference.
CHAPTER III

"IMPENDING DANGERS, HIDDEN GUILT, SUPERNATURAL VISITINGS"

The Sensational, the Exotic, and the Gothic

Sensational and exotic elements were not the sole property of gothic novels but the common stock of many kinds of popular fiction and sub-literature. Modern influence-studies of the gothic have reinforced this view by connecting the gothic novel with various precursors and parallel types which include sensationalism or exoticism in some way: the Italianate revenge drama of the Renaissance, the Oriental fantasy, the sentimental novel, the domestic persecution tragedy of Richardson, Prévost, Arnaud, and Kotzebue, even the pastoral. Sensationalism and exoticism entered into discussions of larger issues, such as the dangers of novel-reading or of escapism. It is not my aim here to search out the "essence" of the gothic; gothic literature and architecture are far too eclectic and synthetic to make that a reasonable task. However, I do propose to set forth the special usefulness of sensationalism and exoticism for the two main gothic strategies that I have already identified: the ambivalent and the nostalgic. Though sensationalism and exoticism do not define precisely what is gothic, those devices were exploited in singular, characteristic ways by the gothicists.

Sir Walter Scott, who paid the first serious, comprehensive, critical attention to gothic fiction, confirms the central place of the sensational and the exotic within it. Scott's remarks in the Prefatory
Memoir which he contributed to the Ballantyne's Novelist's Library edition of Ann Radcliffe's novels (1824), might apply equally well to the gothicists as a group:

The species of romance which Mrs. Radcliffe introduced, bears nearly the same relationship to the novel that the modern anomaly entitled a Melo-drame does to the proper drama. It does not appeal to the judgment by deep delineations of human feeling, or stir the passions by scenes of deep pathos, or awaken the fancy by tracing out, with spirit and vivacity, the lighter traces of life and manners, or excite mirth by strong representations of the ludicrous or humorous. In other words, it attains its interest neither by the path of comedy nor of tragedy; and yet it has, notwithstanding, a deep, decided, and powerful effect, gained by means independent of both—by an appeal, in one word, to the passion of fear, whether excited by natural dangers, or by the suggestions of superstition.

Later in the Memoir, while discussing the role of exotic settings, Scott again stresses the primacy of sensationalism and terror in the gothic:

The materials of these celebrated romances, and the means employed in conducting the narrative, are all selected with a view to the author's primary object, of moving the reader by ideas of impending danger, hidden guilt, supernatural visitings, --by all that is terrible, in short, combined with much that is wonderful.

According to Scott, there is only minor relief from this purpose; comedy or novelty can scarcely detract from it, nor exoticism alienate it entirely. The heroine "is continually struggling with the tide of adversity, and hurried downwards by its torrent; and if any more gay description is occasionally introduced, it is only as a contrast, not a relief, to the melancholy and gloomy tenor of the narrative."  

In all his critical works on the gothic, Scott returns to the idea that manipulation of strong feelings, and of terror in particular, is characteristic of the genre. In doing so, he expresses not only his individual response but the common opinion on the subject, based upon
an interest in the psychology of terror and sensationalism that had been followed since the late seventeenth century.

The study of terror that was closest in time to the birth of the new gothic sensibility was Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). The fact of the *Enquiry*'s potential literary influence has been satisfactorily demonstrated, but the degree or extent of that influence does not matter here. After all, appreciation of terror as an aesthetic experience was available from several earlier sources, most notably John Dennis' *Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704); and the principles of a psychological method of enquiry, as employed by Burke, had been progressively sharpened by Hobbes, Locke, Addison, Hutcheson, and Hume—the last three of these philosophers having also attacked many of the same problems as Burke. Burke's treatise simply had the advantage of respectability and currency over Dennis' when gothicism was being formed.

The *Enquiry*, therefore, is worth examining in great detail not because it significantly influenced the gothic novel—there is too little evidence of that—but because it helps to explain what the gothic sensibility was. So much of what it lays down in theory coincides with the practice of gothic dramatists and novelists that it serves as an accurate guidebook through this particular branch of sensationalist fiction. It is fair to assume that the frequent repetitions of Burke's language and ideas throughout the period when the gothic flourished is an index of the *Enquiry*'s value in revealing the grounds of an increasingly common experience—the willing enjoyment of terror.
The principles of a psychology of terror are set out early in the Enquiry. The basic principle, shared with Hume, is that pain is a source of stronger sensations than pleasure. In the sixth section of Part I Burke concludes that "the passions . . . which are conversant about the preservation of the individual, turn chiefly on pain and danger, and they are the most powerful of all the passions." Hume used this comparison to account for the favoured subjects in poetry: "But nothing can furnish to the poet a variety of scenes, and incidents, and sentiments, except distress, terror, or anxiety. Complete joy and satisfaction is attended with security and leaves no further room for action." Burke maintains this concern with measuring the strength of sensations and of the corresponding pleasure, and it shapes his functional definition of the sublime:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. Without all doubt, the torments which we may be made to suffer, are much greater in their effect on the body and mind, than any pleasures which the most learned voluptuary could suggest, or than the liveliest imagination, and the most sound and exquisitely sensible body could enjoy. . . . But as pain is stronger in its operation than pleasure, so death is in general a much more affecting idea than pain (pp. 58-60).

The link between terror and sublimity is strengthened through repetition:

Whatever therefore is terrible . . . is sublime too . . . for it is impossible to look on anything as trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous. . . . Indeed terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime (pp. 96-97).

Burke even goes so far as to try to show a linguistic connection between
"terror" and "sublimity" (pp. 97-98).

Burke's description of the effects of the sublime upon the mind is highly relevant to gothic techniques. The most powerful degree of sublimity causes the passion of astonishment,

and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force (pp. 95-96).

Thus Burke describes a condition of complete arousal and preoccupation and, most important, a condition which is somehow non-rational or supra-rational. The enjoyer of the sublime must assume a posture of intellectual surrender akin to the gothic victim's and the gothic reader's.

In the fourth part of the Enquiry, devoted to efficient causes, Burke provides a second explanation of this state of submission, this time in physiological terms. The crucial problem is this: how can astonishment, the highest level of sublime emotion, which depends upon pain and terror for its stimulation, be experienced as delight? Burke argues that the tonic effect of the "exercise of the finer parts of the system" (i.e., the nervous system) through "a mode of terror" is analogous to the beneficial, bracing effect of manual labour, "which is a mode of pain," on the grosser organs (i.e., the muscles and tendons). The sublime has a therapeutic effect on the nerves and the faculties of sensation; by seeking the sublime, one literally practices (pp. 254-258).

The practice, however, requires moderate conditions. It most stop short of real pain or torture. At several points Burke emphasizes that
actual safety and security are as necessary to the enjoyment of the
sublime as is artificial terror:

When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of
giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at distances,
and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are
delightful, as we everyday experience (p. 60).

Terror is a passion which always produces delight when it does
not press too close (pp. 73-74).

If the pain and terror are so modified as not to be actually
noxious; if the pain is not carried to violence, and the ter-
ror is not conversant about the present destruction of the
person, as these emotions clear the parts, whether fine, or
gross, of a dangerous and troublesome incumbrance, they are
capable of producing delight; not pleasure, but a sort of
delightful horror, a sort of tranquility tinged with terror.
(p. 257)

As we shall see later, the modifications of terror were as important to
the gothic as the sensationalism that produces terror. Burke's thera-
peutic exercise of the nerves is parallel to the temporary entry into
the gothic world with modern prejudices and values as a sort of lifeline.

Although the physiology of terror was the least plausible part of
the Enquiry, it did generate some long-lived metaphors for gothic
thorists. For example, in her essay "On the Pleasure Derived from
Objects of Terror," Anna Laetitia Aikin (later Mrs. Barbauld) echoes the
Burkean nerve theory: "A strange and unexpected event awakens the mind,
and keeps it on stretch... Passion and fancy co-operating elevate
the soul to its highest pitch; and the pain of terror is lost in amaze-
ment." The survival of such ideas as the aesthetic self-sufficiency
of shock and the transformation of tension into enjoyment was quite
natural, because they helped to justify the attractions of the gothic
and to explain the fascination of excess in quasi-scientific terms.
At any rate, the physiology of terror need not be taken very seriously, as long as we recognize that it was symptomatic of the approaching literary storm. The key point is the defining of a category of literary (and real-life) experience that departs from rational considerations and relies upon sensationalism pushed toward an artificial limit. Since one kind of gothic—the ambivalent—also takes simulated pain, terror, and awe as its principal components, the process of defining that category automatically amounts to an analysis of the gothic.

The real substance of the analysis is Burke's examination of the sources for the sublime in the second and third parts of the Enquiry. Foremost among them is what Burke calls obscurity. It encompasses not only darkness, shadow, or concealment, as might be expected, but secretiveness and deliberate mystification. Burke's illustration of this non-physical sense of obscurity is suggestive of typical gothic themes. He refers to "those despotic governments, which are founded on the passions of men, and principally upon the passion of fear." For such governments, he observes, sublimity is a matter of coercive policy, and they "keep their chief as much as may be from the public eye." Furthermore, "the policy has been much the same in many cases of religion" (pp. 101-102).

Burke's emphasis upon the effect of the obscure and the hidden agent of terror evidently coincided with the gothic novelists' and was understood by them in relation to their own practices. In the posthumous extract "On the Supernatural in Poetry," Ann Radcliffe has one of her scenic travellers refer specifically to this part of the Enquiry,
using Burke's notion of obscurity in order to clarify a new distinction between terror and horror: "Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them.

... And where lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreaded evil?" The terminology is certainly Burke's, but the problem addressed—of decorum and effectiveness—is peculiarly gothic. Burkean theory and gothic experiment agree in finding that what is supplied by the imagination is more terrifying than what is depicted plainly.

This does not diminish the importance of actual force, or the threat of force. Burke affirms that, aside from objects which are themselves dangerous, or which are associated with danger, "I know of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power" (p. 110). However, this source of the sublime is particularly associative and indirect; power is sublime because it represents the potential of the object to inflict pain upon the perceiver. That a potential for power should be sufficient agrees nicely with the requirements of obscurity; for the gothic novelist this means that an exact outlining of a powerful, threatening figure may be delayed almost indefinitely, for maximum terrifying effect. The high ranking of power as a source of the sublime coincides with prominent gothic motifs—the noble rapist, filial submission, the corruption of authority, imprisonment, mental torture—and with prominent gothic symbols, which all represent the power of authority over the individual victim—the castle, the monastery, the prison, and
the madhouse. Considering the primary role of pain and power in Burke's theory, it is surprising to find a modern student of sadistic literature like Mario Praz missing the point of the Enquiry entirely and failing to include Burke in his summary of "the aesthetic theory of the Horrid and the Terrible which had gradually developed during the course of the eighteenth century."\textsuperscript{20}

Burke's treatise becomes especially useful for understanding the gothic when it turns to an application of his principles to literature. For example, Burke measures the standard level of obscurity in different arts in order to rank their ability to elicit strong emotions. His axiom is simple: "It is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it affecting to the imagination. . . . A clear idea is . . . another name for a little idea" (pp. 101, 108).\textsuperscript{21} Inasmuch as poetry is an image-making art, "the images raised by poetry are always of this obscure kind" (p. 106). For this reason, poetry is superior to painting, for instance, in producing the sublime; painting tends to strive for accuracy and clarity of imitation, instead of "a judicious obscurity." This preference for poetry (i.e., literature) over the visual and plastic arts is more than a vindication of the literary imagination by a literary man. Through this argument Burke gives an alternative to the mimetic standard of art, which, as I have indicated in Chapter One, was unsuited to the new gothicism. Burke demonstrates that the less accurate and complete the artist's rendition of his subject, the stronger its impact; and strength of sensation is equal, in aesthetic validity, to truth or harmony. Kiely comments on the literary sections of the Enquiry:
... the greater effect of the Enquiry was to enlarge the possibilities of art rather than to restrict and schematize them. Burke's discussion of language, though brief, points the way to further considerations of words as suggestive and evocative rather than strictly imitative. Extending his own argument that the sublime passions depend, to some degree, on an incompleteness of knowledge, he asserts that the business of poetry and rhetoric is "to affect rather by sympathy than imitation; to display rather the effect of things on the mind of the speaker, or of others, than to present a clear idea of the things themselves." 22

The connection with the gothic is twofold. In arguing that the sublime must be judged according to standards adapted to it, Burke puts forth the same sort of claim as Hurd does for the gothic, in the Third Dialogue and the Letters on Chivalry and Romance. 23 It should be noted, in addition, that Hurd's defence of the stylistic superiority of the gothic was partly based on its greater capacity to "produce the sublime."

Moreover, the movement in Burke that Kiely has identified, from imitation and image-making to evocation and exploring internal responses, is the same as the movement of the gothic away from circumstantial reality and the drama of action towards psychological reality and the drama of feeling—a movement we have already seen under way with Walpole's Castle of Otranto. That movement required devices specified under Burke's concept of obscurity: suggestion, rich and wild imagery, carefully managed disorder, and suspense.

Other items on Burke's list of sources for the sublime help to define the aesthetics of the gothic. Among the "general privations," for example, Burke names "Vacuity, Darkness, Solitude and Silence," (p. 125) which also happen to be the conditions of that central experience of gothic fiction, the protagonist's imprisonment. These conditions are also present in the graphic monument of what Lévy calls the
"claustral," Piranesi's series of etchings of the Carceri d'Invenzione. Speaking of the sublime effect of suddenly alternating brightness and darkness, Burke observes: "And this is not the only instance wherein the opposite extremes operate equally in favour of the sublime, which in all things abhors mediocrity" (pp. 146-147). We encounter the same abhorrence in gothic fiction, where both scene-painting and characterization elevate the taste for juxtaposed extremes almost to a theory of personality. Burke makes this taste consistent with his philosophical technique: "He attempts to describe the strongest of emotions, the most engrossing of ideas, the greatest of pleasures, the most dreadful pains, in an effort to ascertain what inventions of the imagination might produce them. The ultimate art should stimulate the ultimate response." Although the effort sometimes yields trivial results, such as Burke's exhaustive treatment of intermittent sounds and flashing lights, the desire for the ultimate and the excessive—the basic impulse of the gothic sensibility—is set by Burke on an empirical foundation which makes it appear more credible and legitimate.

The final source of the sublime worth considering here is "the artificial infinite," a concept which we meet in connection with architecture. Burke's plain opinion of gothic architecture was unfavourable:

Burke himself never recognized tim: Gothic architecture the outstanding illustration of the sublime he advocated: magnitude, apparent disorder, magnificent profusion of detail, the expression of immense energy, the suggestion of infinity through ornamental traceries, the awful gloom of the interior... his sole reference to Gothicism reveals the common Augustan prejudices. Yet, when we examine the concept of the artificial infinite closely, we shall see how it might be interpreted to support gothicism, in architec-
nature and in fiction, against Burke's avowed lack of sympathy.

The artificial infinite is a distillation of various factors: the mind's passive attitude before the sublime, the mind's acquiescence in its own deception by the sublime, the appeal of the sublime to irrational and mechanical mental processes, and the positive value of power, terror, and ignorance in furthering the sublime. The crucial fact about impressions of the infinite--whether it is real or artificial--is the mind's inability to conceive of boundaries or limits to the supposedly infinite object. The mind is overwhelmed, its reasoning faculties rendered useless. Often this is a matter of illusion, and Burke offers the example of "succession and uniformity" in order to describe the process. The repetition of identical objects in sequence, such as the columns of a rotunda or a colonnade or an oblong Grecian temple, tends to persuade the viewer's mind to supply mechanically an infinite progression where, in reality, none exists. On these grounds, Burke complains against the profusion of right-angles and broken visual planes in the cruciform gothic cathedral plan, which distracts the perceiver's attention and spoils any possible illusion (pp. 134-135).

Burke's theory, however, including the artificial infinite, was adapted to support the contrary argument, in favour of the gothic. Chief among the adaptors were Uvedale Price, who built also upon Vanbrugh's and Reynolds' ideas, and the Rev. John Milner, who claimed that the superiority of the gothic for ecclesiastical buildings was authorized by Burke and asserted that gothic churches "are more conducive to 'prayer and contemplation'."27 Only twenty years after the *Enquiry* appeared Mrs. Thrale was able to cite Burke in support of a favourable
opinion of gothic things, his original attitude having merged somehow with Horace Walpole's: "I observed it was in Manners as in Architecture, the Gothick struck one most forcibly, the Grecian delighted one more sensibly. 'Tis the Sublime & beautiful of Burke over again."\textsuperscript{28}

The reversal of architectural attitude becomes less puzzling when we take into account a feature of the artificial infinite, as Burke describes it, which is perfectly attuned to neo-gothic tastes in building. I am referring to the orientation of the infinite, and hence, the sublime. Burke considers the question of whether the illusion of infinity operates more powerfully in one direction than another, and he concludes that the sublime is, above all else, an experience of vertical or perpendicular infinity.\textsuperscript{29} The sublime affects the whole consciousness with vertigo. It is logical that, in comparison, horizontal infinity—viewing an expansive panorama—gives an inferior thrill, for it bears no immediate sign of power relationships, of potential identification with the superior or the inferior. I have already referred (Chapter One, note 26) to Virginia Hyde's observation that neo-gothic taste was greatly affected by the Perpendicular style, favouring exaggerated, soaring vertical lines, and I believe it a fair generalization. We find the epitome of this taste for verticality in William Beckford's reconstructed Fonthill Abbey, with its soaring, structurally unsound octagon tower, its twelve-foot-high park wall, and its cavernous, inhuman interior spaces.\textsuperscript{30} If Beckford was not striving for terror, he was at least looking to create very strong impressions, impressions that seem to demand a kind of perceptual submission that is part of the sublime.
Burke spends relatively little time dealing directly with this aspect of gothic taste, but the remainder of his theory gives a satisfactory psychological account of it, in which verticality is not merely of optical significance. Maurice Lévy, for example, believes that the common element in neo-gothic architecture and gothic fiction is the replacement of a horizontal by a vertical axis of imagination. Lévy combines the ideas of obscurity and infinity to extend the range of sublime objects, so that they include difficult or arcane knowledge, of the self or of ultimate things. The vertical infinite is the line of dreaming, of initiation, of questing, of descent into deeper levels of consciousness. Lévy suggests that the recurrent vertical arrangement of architecture and of narrative layers in the gothic novels symbolizes the arrangement of the personality and the dreamer's penetration through it, a movement which is both illuminating and terrifying. He also links the idea of vertical infinity to the historical preoccupations in the novels:

C'est encore par un mouvement de descente verticale dans un passé national qu'on explique le mieux le retour à l'époque des Croisades, de la Reine Elisabeth, ou du roi Charles 1er. Collectivement ... la société anglaise s'engouffre dans son histoire pour y trouver obscurement sa vérité, peut-être aussi pour y puiser des images susceptibles de l'aider à intégrer, en les fixant à un niveau rassurant de son propre passé national, les événements de 89.

Inasmuch as it can be adapted to the creation of fictional scenes, characters, and plots, the idea of the artificial infinite also provides a simple model of gothic technique. Just as the viewer of a sublime object, limited to a monotonous yet suggestive set of images, builds his sensation of being overwhelmed (i.e., of the sublime) on the extension of those images, so the reader of gothic fiction, held in ignorance
except for a few disturbing impressions constantly reinforced--of potential danger, for instance--imagines terrifying events, gruesome personal histories, unseen peril, through the aid of his own conspiring invention.32

The artificial infinite and the vertical orientation were not new features in the literature of the sublime. Both the Longinian and the topographical sublime employ the concept of elevation, either literal or metaphorical, and Burke introduces most of the key objects that would have been familiar from either branch of the theory: mountains, storms, seas, chasms, awesome buildings, limitless space, evocative language. Burke's real innovation, however, is his dissociation of the vertical axis of imagination, and the sublime experience in general, from religious beliefs.

Other enthusiasts of the sublime saw religious significance in their experiences, religious symbols in sublime objects. For them, the sublime was a confrontation between man with his meagre capabilities and the immensity of the divine presence in the physical world. Admiration for sublime scenery was a form of worship well-suited to Christian or Deistic piety.33

Without denying all religious implications, Burke describes a sublimity which is not necessarily or primarily religious in meaning. The vertical line extends from man to God, perhaps, but also from man to whatever is rendered mysterious, potent and terrible by art. The divine power may be the ultimate instance of such potentialities, but Burke does not refer all terror to it. Instead, Burke secularizes the sublime experience by concentrating on the psychological basis for it. For this
reason, we must differ with W. F. Wright's contention that Burke's sublime "arose from a philosophical realization of the divine in nature" and that it had little in common with Walpole's supernatural awe, a claim which leads him to conclude that "the appearance of terror in the English novel had been prepared for scarcely at all." To counter this, I would return to an analogy with architecture. Burke founds a system of terror on psychological, rather than religious, principles at the same time that Walpole and other gothicists are starting to blend ecclesiastical designs freely into their own dramatic structures in order to evoke not only conventional piety but its parody. In both cases the movement is away from previous associations, towards more sensational, flexible practices. Although the terror of the gothic kept its basically religious, authoritarian character, acting as an extension of the strictest Protestant visions of guilt and punishment, the Enquiry shows how different powers and agents may be substituted for the customary ones according to scientific principles—how the stock of terror may be expanded. The main interest in the Enquiry is reserved for the art of pure terror, such as Scott believed that Ann Radcliffe was practicing.

In following that interest, the Enquiry reaches certain conclusions which help to illuminate the difference between ambivalent and nostalgic gothicism.

1. The Enquiry establishes a category of art whose aim is not mimesis but the stimulation of strong feelings. Burke does not treat this as an inferior purpose.
2. The Enquiry demonstrates how the spectacle of pain, or the threat of personal injury, may be the source of a mixed, modified pleasure.

3. In analyzing those qualities of objects which lend them sublimity, the Enquiry arrives at an account of the core of ambivalent gothicism, which seeks to evoke an imaginary yet quasi-historical age of ruthless power, without sentimentality or nostalgia intervening.

4. The common factor in all sublime properties is extremity. The degree of excellence of a sublime object depends upon the intensity and purity of the terror that it induces. Thus, the criterion of aesthetic value shifts away from the usual tests: moral value, educative value, formal perfection—all yield to the strength of the reader's or viewer's sensations.

5. The Enquiry presents surprise, suspense, shock, suggestiveness, and terror as legitimate literary devices, and, of course, these are also the chief instruments of ambivalent gothicism.

6. The Enquiry defines sublimity as whatever draws the imagination and the senses beyond usual limits, including the extraordinary and the unknowable. Though analyzed rationally by Burke, the sublime operates non-rationally. The terror of the sublime originates in the spectator's sense of vulnerability and helplessness, in his delight at a threat survived, at a superior power encountered and withstood. The willing victim, like many gothic protagonists, meets a facsimile of death or of inner darkness which, because it is only a facsimile, can be vanquished.

Pamela Kaufman has interpreted this conquest in terms of the Freudian dualism of eros and thanatos. In effect, within the art of
terror the "fantasies symbolize a preoccupation with survival. . . . Both Burke and Freud agree that the fundamental human desire is to survive and to live as individuals. . . . They differ over which 'passion' expresses this will for self-preservation." Kaufman then draws a connection between Burke's interest in surviving dangers and the gothic: "In Freudian terms, the Gothic fantasy is counter-phobic, that is, it embraces the very terror that it fears." The last phrase is a fine rendition of the ambivalence of the gothic.

The direct thrust of the *Enquiry* is away from conventional literary experiences and towards the exploitation of shock for its own sake—for the imaginative exercise—and for the sake of revealing the darker aspects of the psyche. Yet, if the *Enquiry* does give a rationale for gothic sensationalism, at the same time it also gives, in its very definition of the sublime, the means of opposing excessive sensationalism. Along with the more radical statements we discover a concern for decorum and taste. Or, as Kiely has summarized the relationship between Burke's sublime and the gothic: "One finds in Walpole, Radcliffe, Reeve, and Lewis not only Burke's ideas but Burke's problems." The most persistent problem was setting out boundaries for the sensational, balancing freedom of exploration against disgust and moral revulsion. For the gothic, this problem coincides with the central conflict between nostalgia and ambivalence. In general, we will find that nostalgia militates for more severe limits upon sensationalism, because, as we have seen in Chapter One, the nostalgic version of the gothic world is more selective. Ambivalence requires the techniques of sensationalism in order to depict the excesses of gothic power that it both
admires and condemns.

Burke approached the problem by trying to indicate exactly what kind and what degree of terror were bearable, and by trying to account for the reaction to real, as well as artificially-depicted, scenes of distress. Burke recognizes that there is a difference between delightful horror and disgust, or actual pain; therefore, he favours a surrogate danger, made up of associations with potent objects, suggestions of unnamed threats, and substitutions of symbolic figures for ultimate sources of power.

To his successors this solution was more provocative than conclusive. After all, they had immediate realities like the gothic novel and gothic drama to consider. Mrs. Barbauld (Anna Laetitia Aikin), in a work specifically devoted to the problem, shows with her essentially anti-sensationalist position how sensitive the issue of propriety had become and how many negative cases she saw around her:

It is undoubtedly true . . . that the representation of distress frequently gives pleasure; from which general observation many of our modern writers of tragedy and romance seem to have drawn this inference,—that in order to please, they have nothing more to do than to paint distress in natural and striking colours. With this view, they heap together all the afflicting events and dismal accidents their imagination can furnish; and when they have half broke the reader's heart, they expect he should thank them for his agreeable entertainment. An author of this class sits down, pretty much like an inquisitor, to compute how much suffering he can inflict upon the hero of his tale before he makes an end of him.39

At first it appears as if Mrs. Barbauld were merely questioning the more extravagant uses of the sensational, but as she continues her discussion it becomes clear that she is identifying a failure of what Hume called "conversion"—the accommodation of distinct, and often contrary,
passions. In the process, she implies that painful sensations cannot be converted or modified toward anything like Burke's surrogate pain, and that pity—the preferable emotion—operates quite independently:

The view or relation of mere misery can never be pleasing. We have, indeed, a strong sympathy with all kinds of misery; but it is a feeling of pure unmixed pain, similar in kind, though not equal in degree, to what we feel for ourselves in the like occasions; and never produces that melting sorrow, that thrill of tenderness, to which we give the name of pity. They are two distinct sensations, marked by very different external expression. One causes the nerves to tingle, the flesh to shudder, and the whole countenance to be thrown into strong contradictions; the other relaxes the frame, opens the features, and produces tears.  

This final contrast is equal to the worst of Burke's physiology, yet the prevailing contrast is that between pain, which is neither an aesthetic nor a controllable sensation, and pity, which is both aesthetic and decorous. It was not the painful subject but the painful treatment of it that Mrs. Barbauld disliked, the dropping of pity from the classic terror and pity of tragedy.

This criticism had justification, at least as far as the gothic was concerned. The internal struggle within the gothic centred on questions of excessive sensationalism (i.e., terror-mongering) and the excessive sentimentality usually associated with nostalgia. In 1757 Burke set aside pity as the chief source of our interest in distressing events and placed terror at the core of a prospective literary genre. In 1764 Horace Walpole's translator persona claimed terror as his "author's principal engine" in Otranto. And in 1824 Scott would make terror the characteristic instrument of the gothic. But it is not Mrs. Barbauld's favoured instrument, and her criticism represents the countervailing, censorious voice which required moral elevation, sympathy, and restraint.
rather than spectacle.

Mrs. Barbauld is exact in advising how painful subjects are to be managed. Her recommendations comprise a survey of anti-sensationalist opinion:

... no scenes of misery ought to be exhibited which are not connected with the display of some moral excellence or agreeable quality. ... The misfortunes which excite pity must not be too horrid and overwhelming. ... A judicious author will never attempt to raise pity by any thing mean or disgusting.... there must be a degree of complacence mixed with our sorrows to produce an agreeable sympathy; nothing, therefore, must be admitted which destroys the grace and dignity of suffering. ... Scenes of distress should not be too long continued. All our finer feelings are in a manner momentary, and no art can carry them beyond a certain point, either in intenseness or duration. Constant suffering deadens the heart to tender impressions. ... It is therefore necessary, in a long work, to relieve the mind by scenes of pleasure and gaiety ... provided care be taken not to check the passions while they are flowing.  

However, Mrs. Barbauld further complicates her position in her essay "On Romances: An Imitation." Here she inquires into the reasons for our paradoxical delight in "the groans of misery" and "complicated anguish," and dismisses as simplistic and mistaken two previous lines of argument which Burke had also dismissed: that the spectacle of fictional sufferings aids the reader in bearing his own real ones; and that the sense of commiseration arising from fictional sufferings gives the reader a chance to congratulate himself on his sensitivity and magnanimity. Unfortunately, Mrs. Barbauld does not present her own positive views on the subject. Nevertheless, scanning her critical writings we find a measure of consistency in her suspicion of strong scenes and shock techniques.
Another moderating voice is Dr. Nathan Drake's. In his *Literary Hours*, Drake regards literary fantasy as a refuge from real horrors, in particular from those of the Napoleonic Wars:

> Long . . . as our eyes have been now turned on scenes of turbulence and anarchy, long as we have listened with horror to the storm which has swept over Europe with such ungovernable fury, it must prove highly grateful, highly soothing to the wearied mind, occasionally to repose on such topics as literature and imagination are willing to afford.  

This should not suggest, however, that Drake was attracted to literature only as a means of escape and relaxation. Such motivation would have prejudiced him against gothic sensationalism, which offered escape, perhaps, but not of a kind "highly soothing to the wearied mind."

In fact, Drake was drawn to "gothic superstition" (this included all forms of supernaturalism), which he felt was an enduring imaginative influence, "even in the present polished period of society." Elsewhere Drake made it clear that his contemporaries could only be expected to produce, and to understand, replicas of a past belief which was no longer emotionally or intellectually available to them:

> In this age, when science and literature have spread so extensively, the heavy clouds of superstition have been dispersed, and have assumed a lighter and less formidable hue; for though the tales of Walpole, Reeve, and Radcliffe, or the poetry of Weiland, Burger, and Lewis, still powerfully arrest attention, and keep an ardent curiosity alive, yet is their machinery by no means an object of popular belief, nor can it now lead to dangerous credulity, as when in the times of Tasso, Shakspere, and even Milton, witches and wizards, spectres and fairies, were nearly as important subjects of faith as the most serious doctrines of religion.

Drake valued gothic superstition as a "source of imagery," capable of bringing about "a grateful astonishment, a welcome sensation of fear." He feared that attempts to discredit and expunge from poetry even the simplest and most popular superstitions would cause "our
national poetry" to "degenerate into mere morality, criticism, and satire . . . the sublime, the terrible, and the fanciful in poetry, will no longer exist." Drake's loyalties were close to Hurd's, Walpole's, and Burke's. There is the same delight in fantasy, the same dread of banality and mere common-sense, the same enthusiasm for gothic vitality. But, like Hurd in his cultural defence of gothicism and Walpole in his architectural fantasies, Drake insisted on adding a "sportive" element to the more sombre concept of terror-inspired imagination described by Burke. His gothicism was more eclectic yet low-keyed. Thus he was able to skirt the problem of sensationalism and its limits by identifying two complementary aspects of gothic superstition:

... although this kind of superstition be able to arrest every faculty of the human mind, and to shake, as it were, all nature with horror, yet does it also delight in the most sportive and elegant imagery. . . . The vulgar Gothic . . . turns chiefly on the awful ministration of the Spectre, or the innocent gambols of the Faery.

Drake carried over this distinction in his analysis of folklore and popular beliefs, and was evidently interested enough in advancing the cause of the lighter, "sportive" gothic and its compatibility with the more terrifying kind to compose his own short fiction as a demonstration piece. The resulting story of the knight Henry Fitzowen has negligible literary value, since Drake has had to overlook any principle of dramatic pacing or skilful plot construction for the sake of cramming as many diverse incidents and effects into the story as possible. That he should have bothered with such an inconclusive experiment seems less surprising when we look at his essay "On Objects of Terror." With no great originality Drake here concluded that "objects of terror may . . .
be divided into those which owe their origin to the agency of superhuman beings, and form a part of every system of mythology, and into those which depend upon natural causes and events for their production."

Examining the latter category, Drake came upon the danger of sensationalism which Mrs. Barbauld had also recognized. Because no supernatural agents were involved in causing them, natural terrors were more probable and familiar. There was no distance provided by condescension and rationalization to make them less personal for the enlightened reader. Therefore, they remained a potential source of shock, disgust, and indecency unless carefully managed. The story of Henry Fitzowen should be regarded as an exercise in the counterbalancing of sensationalism.

For this purpose Drake recommended the use of picturesque description, the evocation of conventionally sublime or pathetic sentiments, and the contrivance of suspense devices:

> No efforts of genius . . . are so truly great as those which, approaching the brink of horror, have yet, by the art of the poet or painter, by adjunctive and picturesque embellishment, by pathetic or sublime emotion, been rendered powerful in creating the most delightful and fascinating sensations.

Drake's examples of disgusting and pleasing horror are interesting because they exhibit the tension between subject and treatment:

> A poem, a novel, or a picture, may . . . notwithstanding its accurate imitation of nature and beauty of execution, unfold a scene so horrid, or so cruel, that the art of the painter or the poet is unable to render it communicative of the smallest pleasurable emotion. . . . *The Mysterious Mother* . . . a tragedy by the late celebrated Lord Orford [Horace Walpole], labours under an insuperable defect of this kind. The plot turns upon a mother's premeditated incest with her own son, a catastrophe productive only of horror and aversion, and for which the many well-written scenes introductory to this monstrous event cannot atone.⁵²
Drake commends Dante's story of Ugolino in the *Inferno* as an instance of a painful subject tastefully handled, and applies the same standard to the other founder of a gothic "school":

> In the production of Mrs. Radcliffe, the Shakspeare of Romance Writers, . . . may be found many scenes truly terrific in their conception, yet so softened down, and the mind so much relieved, by the intermixture of beautiful description, or pathetic incident, that the impression of the whole never becomes too strong, never degenerates into horror, but pleasurable emotion is ever the predominating result.\(^5\)

Even Scott, with his full appreciation of terror and the sensational, adopts the "familiarity breeds contempt" argument with regard to the explicitness of horror, correctly employing Burke's doctrine of obscurity in support of his position.\(^5\)

From Burke through Scott, the advocacy of a manipulative, sensational literature was counterbalanced by a reticence that was sometimes moral, sometimes aesthetic. Ideas of limitation merged with ideas of effectiveness and impressiveness. Burke had defined the general limit. The reader's sufferings had to be aesthetically distanced, not authentic or personal; they had to be felt in some way different from actual pain, fear, and horror. That is the point of Mrs. Radcliffe's distinction between terror and horror—the separation of personal and aesthetic passions. This requirement that terror be moderated and distanced was particularly applicable to the gothic, because the conviction persisted that gothic exuberance and inventiveness were insidious forces which might become dangerous, morally and imaginatively.

Of course, the danger, like the imaginary gothic world, was both appalling and attractive, a paradox upon which gothic ambivalence was founded. In considering anxieties over sensationalism and the pressure
to limit it, the different versions of "gothic barbarity"—the ambivalent and the nostalgic—become very important. Underlying desires for restorative fantasy, fears of strong passions, attraction to power and evil or revulsion against them—these competing impulses affected the degree to which sensational elements were accepted and exploited in the gothic novels.

Various shadings of disgust, interest and enthusiasm are discernible among writers and critics: (1) disapproval and avoidance (e.g., Clara Reeve, antiquaries), (2) disapproval yet interest (e.g., A. L. Barbauld, Nathan Drake), (3) qualified approval and moderate use (e.g., Ann Radcliffe, Sophia Lee), (4) open approval yet moderate use (e.g., Horace Walpole, most gothic dramatists), (5) qualified critical approval (e.g., Burke, Scott, Coleridge), and (6) open approval and full use (e.g., Lewis, Maturin, le Fanu, Lovecraft). However, when we study the occurrence of sensationalism in the gothic with attention to the main gothic aims and strategies, this list reduces to two basic positions.

Uneasiness with sensationalism is typical of the nostalgic mode of the gothic. Because that mode concentrates on the heroism and sentimentality which it distills from gothic barbarity, it can accommodate terrifying figures only as intruders into an ideal setting. It will not make them too prominent or attractive. The tendency of the nostalgic mode is to become decorous and conservative. It converts the imaginary gothic world into an ideal extension of the ethical climate of the 1780's and '90's, or into an ideal corrective for it. As we have seen in the case of The Old English Baron, this process of idealization—
whatever the discontent with present realities from which it arises—simply improves upon conventional values by purifying them in fantasy. In serving this end the fantasy is purged of disturbing themes and characters. The emphasis falls on chivalric adventure, rationalized supernaturalism, and a pallid version of romantic love, conducted in an atmosphere which encourages the expression of certain fashionable emotions—melancholy, melting sensibility, pathos, filial piety—and discourages other less governable ones—lust, ambition, jealousy, malevolence, and fear. It is the influence of the nostalgic mode that resists the depiction in gothic novels of sexual rapacity, violence, real supernaturalism, and the dissolution of the family, even in works which are not fundamentally nostalgic. For example, W. F. Wright notes how Mrs. Radcliffe was guided in some matters by the nostalgic mode. Though she did not shrink from depicting physical sufferings and tortures quite graphically, she was careful not to allow any such events to befall her protagonists: "Mrs. Radcliffe treated herself and her readers to the chill experience of horror and, at the same time, preserved her worthy characters free from all stain which would prevent their ultimate happiness and the joyful termination of the story."

The ambivalent mode of gothicism, on the other hand, is fascinated with, and dependent upon, those features of the imaginary gothic world which the nostalgic mode avoids. The ambivalence originates with attitudes towards the putative gothic ancestors and their environment. The gothic is attractive and repellent for the same reasons: its violence, its rampant sexual and material aggressiveness, its dedication to extremes of feeling, action, and belief, its alienation from contemporary
life. The gothic is exciting and tantalizing, yet ambivalence makes one grateful to encounter it only in imagination.

Because the ambivalence concerns terror, force, and power, sensationalism pervades this mode of the gothic. The central experience of this mode is not, as in the nostalgic, a delightful suspension of banality and common-sense; instead, it is an experience of being overwhelmed—by strong, disturbing sensations, by political or religious tyranny, by mystification, by an oppressive sense of the alien. The reader's resistance lies in his enlightened contempt for the gothic world, which does not permit him to lend too much credence to the fantasies set within it. Nevertheless, he willingly suffers manipulation of his fears, expectations and prejudices, in an exotic atmosphere which both verifies and limits the reality of his terror.

The reader's reward—parallel to the psychological exercise that Burke describes—is the thematic expansiveness of the mode. The ambivalent mode uses sensationalism so freely, not only in line with Burke's discovery that sensationalism can move an audience irrationally, but also in line with its preoccupation, which is irrationality itself. The ambivalent mode concentrates on the fate of victims in extreme situations, sufferers of extraordinary sensations—situations and sensations readily disposed in the imaginary gothic world. The reader shares in the extremity from a safe distance, so that he is, simultaneously, disturbed and reassured by it.

The distance is largely achieved through exoticism, and in this matter, too, nostalgia and ambivalence differ. In the nostalgic mode, the gothic world is exotic in direct proportion to the gothicist's
antiquarian interests or disaffection with the present. The ideal world
may be more or less historical, more or less insistently alien, but the
exoticism is never a mask for threatening subjects since those are
rarely present. Scott has explained the value of the exotic for ambiva­
 lent gothicism in his preface to Radcliffe's novels:

She has uniformly selected the south of Europe for her places
of action, whose passions, like the weeds of the climate, are
supposed to attain portentous growth under the fostering sun;
which abounds with ruined monuments of antiquity, as well as
the more massive remnants of the middle ages; and where feudal
tyranny and Catholic superstition still continue to exercise
their sway over the slave and bigot, and to indulge to the
haughty lord, or more haughty priest, that sort of despotic
power, the exercise of which seldom fails to deprave the heart,
and disorder the judgment. These circumstances are skilfully
selected, to give probability to events which could not, with­
out great violation of truth, be represented as having taken
place in England.57

The exotic settings and characters not only prevent the violation
of truth but also the violation of the modern reader's confidence that
his own time is essentially different from the gothic. Such confidence
is a crucial part of the ambivalent position, and it is expressed in
that configuration typical of the ambivalent mode, the confrontation
pattern.

Bertrand Evans has used the study of confrontation patterns to
extend the idea of exoticism beyond the geographical. Evans sees the
relationship between gothic protagonists and their persecutors as a case
of different cultures brought together by apparent historical accident.
The source of terror is the friction between their mutually incomprehen­
sible systems of moral and aesthetic values:

Walpole's Isabel [sic] and Mrs. Radcliffe's Adeline, Emily,
and Ellena were no more born to the medieval scene than were
Pamela and Evelina. Enlightened, virtuous, and "sensible,"
they had been uprooted from their proper society and, with contemporary emotional and intellectual patterns intact, thrust into that era which was "barbarous." Subjected to the various menaces of the Dark Ages, they served as projections of the nervous system of their own time, as sensitive registers of emotional reaction to horrors, and, clearly, as transmitters of the thrills of their exposure. When they shuddered, their home-bound contemporaries shuddered.58

According to Evans, the persecutor is the representative of the barbarous, dangerous gothic era. His lair (castle, palace, chateau, monastery) is the physical symbol of that era—specifically, of its endurance or decay—and from the style of its construction and its state of repair we may infer much about the time and place that we, and the protagonists, have entered. The placing of ruined castles and abbeys in medieval settings, against all chronological probability, was not always a novelist's oversight. Ruins bore significances which we have already noted in some detail. They were melancholy reminders of mutability or cheerful reminders that tyrannical political and religious institutions had been replaced. In addition, however, given the more pejorative connotation of gothic as anachronistic, these ruins and their occupants also represent the presence of outmoded tastes and manners in the midst of modern society. Thus, the presentation of the conflict between gothic protagonist and gothic villain in historical or inter-cultural terms is a way of isolating aberrant forces within contemporary society. Safely removed from immediate reality, such gothic barbarities may be rendered contemptible and, at the same time, may be admired for their sheer brutality and magnificence.

The convenient notion of "gothic manners" is as adaptable within the gothic novel as in common usage; in the novel, it serves to mark off the various gradations of villainy and the lines of conflict.
A striking example of conflict which shows the effect of ambivalence on gothic characterization occurs in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). The heroine, Emily St. Aubert, and her aunt, who has just become Mme. Montoni, are crossing the Alps into Italy. This particular journey had been the testing ground for picturesque and sublime sensibility at least since John Dennis made it in 1688, and the two women react in ways characteristic of their different positions on the scale of taste. While Emily's soul rises in fashionable accord with the sublimity of cliffs and gorges and bursts forth regularly in poetic effusions of sensibility, Mme. Montoni's response is recognizably old-fashioned, and perhaps more realistic: she is agitated by the dangers of the passage and disgusted by the chaos of rock and snow around her. This throwback to older ideas of order and security offends Emily because it is stodgy and insensitive, but there is evidence from outside the novel that Radcliffe was not wholly in sympathy with this opinion. Writing in her travel journals of her trip down the Rhine, she reports that the cliffs, the high wind, the roar of the river and the force of its currents "were circumstances of the true sublime, inspiring terror in some and admiration in a high degree." Yet, later during the ascent of Skiddaw she has trouble enjoying the sublime fully: "But our situation was too critical, or too unusual, to permit the just impressions of such sublimity. . . . We followed the guide in silence, and, till we regained the more open wild, had no leisure for exclamation." Mme. Montoni's ethical, as well as aesthetic, insensitivity is rewarded through her marriage to the ruthless Montoni, whose tastes are as superficial as his moral code. Since Montoni is truly a denizen of
the gothic world (decadent Venice, the terrifying Apennine stronghold), Emily seems entrapped in the usual pattern of confrontation. But, as I have suggested, much of the conflict is displaced, and Emily's side is by no means vindicated at once. If she is a representative of a certain time or of a certain recognizable character type—the youth of exquisite sensibility—she also must bear the weaknesses of that time and the type. So the confrontation's meaning cuts both ways. Although both the aunt and Montoni are unsympathetic characters—the latter an alien—they effectively question the usefulness of Emily's emotionalism. A good part of the terror in Emily's encounter with Montoni comes from the realization that violence does not require an active imagination like hers in order to be successful and magnificent. Montoni is pitiless and tasteless, but in his world Emily's passions and appreciation of natural beauty and sublimity are rendered rather silly. They will not save her from him; for a time they prevent her from thinking inventively of her own safety. The pattern of confrontation in Udolfo both confirms the conventional, reassuring assumptions about gothic dangers and presents a feature of contemporary culture—excessive sensibility and the need for fresh terrors—in a less flattering light. 61

Confrontation is the natural pattern for ambivalence to assume in the gothic because it reflects divisions within society and the personality. The battleground of the personality requires exotic distancing more than the battleground of customs and mores, because it is so much closer to individual fears and revulsions, and is therefore more liable to repel the reader. The exotic trappings—castles, ruins, foreign stereotypes, archaic language and manners—are necessary because they
permit the setting apart of threatening yet fascinating potentialities within society and within the self. It is as if such things were merely, exclusively gothic, and consequently denatured. Exoticism amounts to a compromise with the reader's internal and cultural censorship very much like Walpole's compromise with prevailing architectural taste. The advantage gained is the same: a new area is claimed for the exploring imagination.

In the case of ambivalent gothicism, the area prepared for freer exploration is the realm of terror, extremity and abnormal personality. That preoccupation explains why Burke's psychological theories reveal so lucidly the basis of the gothic sensibility in fiction; for, as we shall see in the detailed study of selected gothic novels in the next chapter, ambivalence, with its characteristic themes and methods, dominates gothic fiction. It incorporates the nostalgic mode only to corrupt it, showing its idealism to be a delusory myth. Instead of gothic ideals, the ambivalence of the fiction results in an obsession with dualities, of which the typical pattern of confrontation is merely the most obvious case. In the gothic novels we will discover sexual aggression juxtaposed with sexual passivity, brutality with gentility, insensitivity with sensibility, selfishness with selflessness, coercion with justice, ambition with humility, and blasphemy with piety.
FOOTNOTES

1 McIntyre, "Were the Gothic Novels Gothic?" and "The Later Career of the Elizabethan Villain Hero"; for a counter-argument see Bertrand Evans, Gothic Drama, pp. 11-12.


9 Ibid., p. xxiii.


15. Compare Hume, p. 193: "It seems an unaccountable pleasure which the spectators of a well-written tragedy receive from sorrow, terror, anxiety, and other passions that are in themselves disagreeable and uneasy."

16. This follows Hume's doctrine (pp. 196-197) of conversion, by which the force of the imagination dominates over the normal effect of the passion, converting it to its own direction.


19. "On the Supernatural in Poetry. By the late Mrs. Radcliffe," *New Monthly Magazine*, 16, 62 (1826), 149-150. As the editor explains, this is not really an essay but an extract from the introduction to Radcliffe's last published work, the novel *Gaston De Blondeville*, which also appeared in 1826.


Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) published the second, greatly revised edition of the Carceri in 1765. See Drawings and Etchings at Columbia University (New York: Columbia Univ., 1972); Aldous Huxley, Prisons with the "Carceri" Etchings by G. B. Piranesi (London: Trianon Press, 1949); for a response to Piranesi from within the neogothic period, see the "Pains of Opium" section of Thomas De Quincey, Confessions of an English Opium Eater, 1st edn. (1821; rpt., ed. Alethea Hayter, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 105-107. It is significant that De Quincey mistakenly calls Piranesi's architectural fantasies "Gothic halls."


Boulton, p. cvii.


Thraliana, quoted in Boulton, p. xcii.

The actual discussion of horizontal and vertical comes in Part Two, Section VII of the Enquiry under "vastness." The difference between vastness and infinity is negligible.


Lévy, pp. 641-642.

Radcliffe describes this process in "On the Supernatural," pp. 149-150.


W. F. Wright, p. 96.
In architecture, at least, sensationalism and flexibility were to become important issues. In his *History of the Gothic Revival*, Eastlake condemns virtually all neo-gothic building before Milner for excessively free adaptation of traditional gothic features, yet, at the other end of his historical period, he defends Street's and Butterfield's experiments with modern materials and "imported" styles.


Compare Addison, *Spectator*, #418.


"On Gothic Superstition," p. 108. Note the close paraphrase of Burke.

Ibid., p. 112.

Ibid., p. 106.

*Literary Hours*, I, 269-275.

Ibid., p. 269.
52 Ibid., p. 271.

53 Ibid., pp. 273-274.


56 W. F. Wright, pp. 107-108; see also Tompkins, pp. 258-259.


58 Evans, Gothic Drama, pp. 8-9.


60 Ibid., pp. 456-457.

61 Nelson C. Smith, "Sense, Sensibility and Ann Radcliffe," demonstrates, contrary to usual opinion, a strain of criticism of sensibility in Radcliffe's novels, which makes her position closer to such satirists of the gothic cult as Peacock and Jane Austen.
CHAPTER IV
EROTIC DANGERS, MONASTIC TYRANNY, AND FAMILY SECRETS

Themes in the Ambivalent Gothic

If nostalgia for gothic ancestors results in the creation of an idyllic realm in fiction and fantasy which they may populate, ambivalence towards the gothic produces a radically different pattern. Permeated with danger, violence and strange magnificence, the imaginary world of the ambivalent mode is often sustained by erotic themes. Power is won through sexual crimes or is used to commit them. Persecutions are mounted in order to gain sexual prey. The villain-hero suffers from, and is compelled by, his perverted erotic passions, abetted by his stunted emotional growth. The over-reaching that is characteristic of his career usually has sexual overtones and consequences. The thwarting of full erotic expression becomes, in gothic fiction, the mark of all destructive educational regimes, the source and instrument of all authority, including the parental. Victims who enter this gothic world assume that the expected assault against them will be sexual—at least in part—or that it will try to block their own sexual impulses, about which, however, they may be confused. Whatever learning arises from their predicament concerns the erotic aspect of their character.

In this concentration on erotic violence and depredations the gothic novel follows a wider interest. In a survey of the sexual mores reflected in eighteenth-century fiction, Harrison Steeves has suggested
that a preoccupation with "libertinism, callous intrigue, and even sexual violence" was generalized, and that such a preoccupation arose from real problems and anxieties:

Love in the modern sense; that is, sexual interest associated more or less closely with other spiritual and intellectual relations, is, to be sure, the romantic theme of most eighteenth-century fictions, but sinister sexual complication is a characteristic adjunct of the standard theme. In the whole breadth of that fiction we see sex in all its fluctuating lights and shadows, but very commonly as a road to misery of one sort or another. ... In the eighteenth century its material effects could be ... hopelessly tragic. Perhaps with this picture before us we can understand why the moralists of the century spoke of seduction or sexual surrender as "worse than death." In the merely physical sense it often was. Morally, it might in the end result in the utter annihilation of personality and self-respect. The fears and compunctions of the heroines of fiction were not illusions and not mere pietistic sentiments; they were practical wisdom.¹

While the reality of sexual danger and the effects of class antagonism help to explain some features of the gothic novels--such as their great appeal to female readers--gothic fiction remains, nevertheless, a special case. Gothic fiction treats power, violence, and sexuality not as adjuncts of the standard, romantic theme but as a counterpoint to it. The nostalgic use of putative gothic ancestors requires that they be moral superiors; therefore, the nostalgic mode acquires a taste for romantic, chivalric love, for fine ceremony, for stylized eroticism at the most. The ambivalent view of the gothic period requires, for political as well as psychological reasons,² a strong, disturbing undercurrent of violence and sexual rapacity, which gradually overcomes any pretense of historical accuracy or idealization. As the ambivalent mode resists the nostalgic, the gothic novel becomes as concerned with the psychology of the persecutor as with that of the victim. Mrs. Barbauld's
prescription—that only the sufferings of the just should be depicted sympathetically—does not apply. Moreover, although the gothic novel includes, and relies upon, the tension generated by real sexual aggression, it is not much taken up with redressing real grievances, teaching prudent behaviour, or proposing realistic solutions to problems. It is more an exploratory than a didactic kind of literature, and its natural field of operation is the landscape of extremity, which is mainly internal, whose denizens are the inflicters and sufferers of torture—frequently interchangeable pairs.

From the time of its inception, with Otranto, the ambivalent mode seeks to present "mere men and women ... in extraordinary positions," and to put its audience, as nearly as possible, in the same positions, under the influence of terror and persecution. In doing so, its purpose is to investigate the esoteric regions of the psyche, by pursuing disturbing facts—abnormal sexuality, abuse of power, the attraction of evil, the internal warfare of the mind—to their extreme manifestations. Because the ambivalent mode succeeds in conducting this pursuit under cover of certain prejudices about the historical or geographical setting of its activities, it both censors and insinuates subjects which would be horribly painful if approached directly and realistically.

As Scott observed, the setting of gothic novels is mainly adapted to this purpose, and the more a particular setting is normally associated with extremes of behaviour and feeling the better suited it is for gothic use. Existing prejudices and fantasy-images are most serviceable, and none more so for gothic fiction than the conventional wisdom to the effect that monasteries and convents were havens for criminals and
sexual deviants. This basic tenet of religious nationalism in England and of anti-clericalism on the Continent was perhaps supported by what were perceived in the North to be Counter-Reformation crimes against rationality and freedom, but the animus brought to bear against Catholic institutions in gothic fiction, where they are an absorbing, regular subject, is on account of their unnaturalness, and hence, their perfect representation of forces that also strongly affect the non-monastic society. In particular, the ability of monks and nuns, in fiction, to shape, control, and distort the individual character is an exaggerated account of the whole process of education, told only in extreme, dialectical terms. The recurrent monkish villains and monastic settings of gothic novels provide an exaggerated model of personality development and the abuse of power by authorities and institutions.

Some examples will make clear how nearly theoretical this notion of monasticism becomes, an unusual trend for a literary type which is so notoriously non-didactic. The first example involves a comparison with Denis Diderot's The Nun (La Religieuse, 1760), a novel based on a real case of conventual tyranny and meant to expose and combat the genuine evils of the monastic system. It is remarkable that the serious indictment contained in the first memorandum of defence drafted by M. Manouri, advocate for the heroine Suzanne, raises many of the same objections that are commonplace in gothic fiction:

Are convents so essential to the constitution of a state? ... What need has the Bridegroom of so many foolish virgins? And the human race of so many victims? ... Does God, who made man sociable, approve of his hiding himself away? Can God, who made man so inconstant and frail, authorize such rash vows? Can these vows, which run counter to our natural inclinations, ever be properly observed except by a few abnormal creatures in whom
the seeds of passion are dried up, and whom we should rightly classify as freaks of nature if the state of our knowledge allowed us to understand the internal structure of man as well as we understand his external appearance? Do all these lugubrious ceremonies played out at the taking of the habit or the profession, when a man or woman is set apart for the monastic life and for woe, suspend the animal functions? On the contrary, do not these instincts awaken in silence, constraint and idleness with a violence unknown to the people in the world who are busy with countless other things? Where do we see minds obsessed by impure visions which haunt them and drive them on? Where do we see that fathomless boredom, that pallor, that emaciation which are all symptoms of wasting and self-consuming nature?3

The tirade drags on further, but the questions are rhetorical, given Diderot's evident purpose. Similarly, no one is exposed to the ambivalent gothic vision for long without learning that all the answers point to the monastic target. There is nothing in Manouri's memorandum, or in Diderot's narrative, that is not a confirmation--albeit in sensationalized form--of popular beliefs, that is not echoed in gothic fiction.

Thus characterized, the monastic system is truly gothic, in several senses of the term. It is outmoded, an anachronism within the prevailing political and intellectual order. It is tyrannical, maintained by mental and physical brutality. It is barbarous and irrational. Having decayed like the gothic ruin it usually inhabits, it avidly promotes the decay of its unwilling members.

Belief in monastic perfidy, or at least in the unnaturalness of the monastic way of life, penetrates even less rabid depictions of monks and nuns. There are numerous reversions to this belief in Ann Radcliffe's novels,4 each adhering fairly well to the standard line.

In The Romance of the Forest, for example, Adeline, the extremely emotional female protagonist, confides in Mme. La Motte, the wife of her
temporary guardian, some details of her education in a convent. Like many helpless young women in gothic novels she is pressured to take the veil, but she is sensible and reluctant:

Too long had I been immured in the walls of a cloister, and too much had I seen of the sullen misery of its votaries, not to feel horror and disgust at the prospect of being added to their numbers.

The "Lady Abbess" uses the typical propagandistic and coercive approach of the unscrupulous pursuer of novices:

It was her method, when she wanted to make converts to her order, to denounce and terrify rather than to persuade and allure. Here were the arts of cunning practiced upon fear, not those of sophistication upon reason [but it is clear that Radcliffe does not approve of either technique]. She employed numberless stratagems to gain me to her purpose, and they all wore the complexion of her character. But in the life to which she would have devoted me, I saw too many forms of real terror, to be overcome by the influence of her ideal host, and was resolute in rejecting the veil. Here I passed several years of miserable resistance against cruelty and superstition.

Adeline goes on to describe the tedium of her existence:

... at length the horrors of the monastic life rose so fully to my view that fortitude gave way before them. Excluded from the cheerful intercourse of society—from the pleasant view of nature—from the light of day—condemned to silence—rigid formality—abstinence and penance—condemned to forego the delights of a world, which imagination painted in the gayest and most alluring colors, and whose hues were, perhaps, not the less captivating because they were only ideal—such was the state to which I was destined. 5

In The Mysteries of Udolpho, Emily takes refuge in a monastic community after her father's death, and she is treated well there, but she—or rather Radcliffe—cannot resist criticizing the unhealthy lassitude of the monks, who lead a secluded, quiet life contemplating the same natural beauty that Emily herself admires so much, without her opportunity to re-enter active society. 6
Radcliffe is less violently anti-Catholic than some gothic novelists, but her most charitable depictions of monasticism are tinged with the same conventional suspicions. In *The Italian* she imagines an ideal house, the convent of the *Santa della Pieta*, which is run according to the principles of Shaftesburian benevolence instead of the regular discipline. Radcliffe makes the abbess and sisters exceptionally compassionate and virtuous, while emphasizing that "the society of Our Lady of Pity was such as a convent does not often shroud." In fact, the goodness of the Abbess lies in her less-than-perfect observance of the letter of Church law and her improved, but heretical, grounds for belief:

*Her religion was neither gloomy, nor bigotted; it was the sentiment of a grateful heart offering itself up to a Deity, who delights in the happiness of his creatures; and she conformed to the customs of the Roman church, without supposing a faith in all of them to be necessary to salvation. This opinion, however, she was obliged to conceal, lest her very virtue should draw upon her the punishment of a crime, from some fierce ecclesiastics, who contradicted in their practice the very essential principles, which the Christianity they professed would have taught them.*

Radcliffe contrasts the mild, equable rule and demeanor of the Abbess with the treachery and ruthlessness of the Ursaline abbess from whose dubious protection the heroine Ellena is later abducted. This running comparison sets in proper perspective Radcliffe's creation of an idealized female community very much like the most successful real convents. The convent of the *Santa della Pieta* is an authentic matriarchy, and it is easy to see why Ellena succumbs to its attractiveness. She is a helpless orphan—like most gothic "innocents"—who has lost her sole guardian and is searching desperately for real, or even surrogate, parents. The Abbess of the *Santa della Pieta* temporarily fills the place
of mother until Ellena can meet her real mother (Sister Olivia of the Ursalines, who remains unknown to her through most of the novel, and who is persecuted by the evil "mother" of the order). The motherliness of the good Abbess originates in universal qualities of humane leadership and active virtue. Like the ideal characteristics of Clara Reeve's protagonists in *The Old English Baron*, these are backward projections of values that definitely are not gothic:

> In her lectures to the nuns she seldom touched upon points of faith, but explained and enforced the moral duties, particularly such as were most practicable in the society to which she belonged; such as tended to soften and harmonize the affections, to impart that repose of mind, which persuades to the practice of sisterly kindness, universal charity, and the most pure and elevated devotion. When she spoke of religion, it appeared so interesting, so beautiful, that her attentive auditors revered and loved it as a friend, a refiner of the heart, a sublime consoler. . . .

> The society appeared like a large family, of which the Lady abbess was the mother, rather than an assemblage of strangers.  

By means of such benign figures, the nostalgic attitude towards the gothic occasionally appears against the darker, more threatening background. But it is the "assemblage of strangers," not the ideal community, to which the gothic novel returns with greatest interest. Here is the subject of the novelists' deepest psychological penetration. Here are their most disturbing revelations of the desolation of souls. Monasticism is made to provide a complete pattern of the distorted society and the fragmented psyche. Full exploitation of its potential to represent the decay of normal feelings and attachments begins with M. G. Lewis' *The Monk.* Lewis offers the most consistently erotic interpretation of "monkish malignancy" in any gothic novel, an interpretation which, once noticed and misunderstood, made both novel and novelist infamous.
fact, *The Monk* is an odd mixture of voices and techniques. Its frequent, lurid sadism connects it with the sub-literature of excess and titillation, yet the flagrancy of its sexual imagery is deceptive; for, beneath the lurid surface where Ambrosio's utter ruination is avidly described, there is a level of acute, subtle observation of motives and compulsions. At this level, *The Monk* progresses beyond the mere stimulation of fear and excitement, and it would be fairer to associate it with the minute internal analysis of Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* than the blandishments of sensationalism.

*The Monk* is worth examining closely for its successful transformation of stereotypes and stock figures into a repellent yet fascinating image of human viciousness and self-deception. Many of the sardonic comments with which the narrative is laced seem to reinforce the stereotypes, as if to suggest—and the contemporary reader would probably agree—that crudeness, violence and duplicity are what one should expect of barbarous times and a barbarous people. Despite such reassurances, however, the threatening implications of the "gothic manners" displayed in *The Monk* are not restricted to the alien environment.

In *The Monk* the familiar elements of monastic evil—persecution, hypocrisy, lasciviousness, power-hunger—are put in service to a peculiar vision of human disease. Starting with caustic but rather juvenile satire, based on immediately recognizable comic types, Lewis gradually builds a darker, more hysterical account of the division and destruction of the personality. Although the emotional centre of the narrative is a single, extended catastrophe—the temptation and surrender of Ambrosio—Lewis persists in linking Ambrosio's vulnerability, his pride and his
compulsions, with the weaknesses of the ostensible representatives of normality in the fictional world. The master stroke of Lewis' technique is his insistence on tracing the various dualities of personality involved in Ambrosio's downfall in the sympathetic characters as well, his delight in subjecting them to the same satanic, chaotic, subconscious forces, on a minor scale. The corruption of the "villain" finds a reflection in the innocent faces of the other male figures, rendering their heroism much less certain. Lewis even raises the possibility that they do not have the courage, or the desperation arising from accidental circumstances, to follow through with their own obsessions, that a failure of will and imagination, more than a triumph of virtue, separates them from Ambrosio's circle of damnation. The subversive--because the attractive--line is the one the mob and the "heroic" figures take, the one that Lewis invites the reader to take, only to be trapped by it: a confidence in one's self-righteousness before Ambrosio's example, as if there were no identification with him and no vicarious enjoyment of his career.

The Monk opens with references to many useful stereotypes: Spanish lustfulness, hypocrisy coupled with devoutness, cunning Catholic propaganda. The reader is not allowed to lend any credence to the trappings of piety, nor to develop any nostalgic interest in them, for they are made ridiculous as soon as they are introduced. To alert our suspicions, Lewis sets the first scene in the Abbey Church of the Capuchins where a large crowd has pressed in, apparently to witness the sermon of the famous abbot, Ambrosio. The spiritual bankruptcy of this throng is a fitting complement to that which Ambrosio has so far managed to conceal,
Do not encourage the idea that the Crowd was assembled
either from motives of piety or thirst of information. But
very few were influenced by those reasons; and in a city
where superstition reigns with such despotic sway as in
Madrid, to seek for true devotion would be a fruitless at-
tempt. The Audience now assembled in the Capuchin Church
was collected by various causes, but all of them were
foreign to the ostensible motive. The Women came to show
themselves, the Men to see the Women: Some were attracted
by curiosity to hear an Orator so celebrated; Some came
because they had not better means of employing their time
till the play began; Some from being assured that it would
be impossible to find places in the Church; and one half of
Madrid was brought thither by expecting to meet the other
half. The only persons truly anxious to hear the Preacher
were a few antiquated devotees, and half a dozen rival
Orators, determined to find fault with and ridicule the
discourse. As to the remainder of the Audience, the Sermon
might have been omitted altogether, certainly without their
being disappointed, and very probably without their per-
ceiving the omission (p. 7).

Lewis reverts to this cynical, flippant voice whenever he needs to
reaffirm the correctness of his reader's expectations, to remind the
reader that the curious behaviour of the Spaniards should not surprise
him. Yet, as the cynicism wears thin, we come to realize that the
opening scene serves another purpose: this is the first of several
attempts to reduce the motivation for all actions, including the pro-
tagonists', to the lowest common denominator. Lewis appears to delight
in revealing the ambiguous meaning of normally "pure" actions--prayer,
courtship, heroism, charity. For this reason the somewhat unwieldy
comedy of the initial Church scene does not dilute the menace flowing
beneath it. Innocent gestures and intentions may be registered for
later reconsideration.

One example of such cultivated ambiguities will be especially use-
ful later in this discussion when we look at the significance of peri-
pheral characters and plot-lines. It is an apparently comic incident in
the opening scene. The young cavalier Lorenzo insists on removing Antonia's veil in order better to observe her charms (p. 11). The obvious reading of the incident emphasizes Antonia's virgin modesty and Lorenzo's flirtatious boldness. Subsequently, however, this unmasking is incorporated into a more sinister pattern. Antonia's physical beauties are progressively exposed, literally laid bare, not only in the self-seductive dreams of Ambrosio and the magical spectacle arranged by Matilda, but also in the ominous dream of Lorenzo himself. As Antonia, like the image of the Virgin, is transformed from chaste maiden into "Medicean Venus," becoming the stimulus for Ambrosio's lustful fascination, the encounter with Lorenzo and its dream-sequel seem less innocuous than at first. The confused erotic motives in Lorenzo are complemented by the sexual misadventures of the other "heroic" figure, Raymond de las Cistentas, whose subterranean surname is significant.

The sense of impending sexual disaster is evoked at once. Leonella, Antonia's foolish aunt and companion, offers to explain the niece's shyness and provincial ways by telling the story of her parents' unfortunate marriage. The mother, Elvira, had fallen in love with a young nobleman whose father, the former Marquis de las Cistentas, violently opposed the match and finally drove the couple into exile in the West Indies. The outcast nobleman succumbed to homesickness and tropical fever, leaving his family in a state of utter dependency (p. 13).

This exposition is important on three different levels. The history of Elvira's suffering supplies us with the background for one of the major plot-lines—the unsuccessful effort to secure Raymond's protection for Elvira and Antonia. Lewis develops this fairly conventional melo-
dramatic theme of familial reconciliation very little beyond the implication that assistance is always tantalizingly close yet strangely unavailable, a failure due to accidents and miscues. At a second level, the story hints at the eventual solution to the mystery of Ambrosio's origin, for Leonella mentions the presumed death of Elvira's infant son after he was taken away by the angry grandfather.

Despite her overly earnest treatment of it, the greatest importance of Leonella's tale is thematic, for her burden, the tragic perversion of love through rebellion and repression, becomes the principal subject of The Monk. The various tangential episodes and plot-lines are all elaborations of this theme, and it is similarly carried through successive generations. As if by a perverse logic of inheritance, Elvira's unhappy union brings not only Antonia into the world but also her ravisher and murderer, and Elvira's hard-earned wisdom enforces the priggish moralism that helps give the one control over the other. Elvira is the victim of an interfering parent, yet she too intervenes—though on the side of purity and goodness—with equally disastrous results. She deliberately fails to arm her daughter's innocence with discernment, deriving from her own misfortunes the extreme remedy of censorship. The remedy inflames the illness; innocence is as seductive as wantonness. In return for her devotion, Elvira is strangled while trying to stop Ambrosio's illicit "marriage" with his sister. This is a highly complicated revision of Elvira's own story. As is characteristic of The Monk, motives and moral positions are freely substituted. The structure of The Monk is founded upon exactly such repetitions-with-variations. The attentive reader soon discovers that he must read a story like Leonella's both for
exposition and for warning.

When Ambrosio finally appears, he is clothed in such a glowing reputation that his virtue, like the hubris of the hero of classical tragedy, demands reduction. At this point the reader learns another principle of the novel's process which closely resembles the magnetic principle of the attraction of opposite poles. For Lewis there is a necessity—psychological as well as dramatic—that compels the possessors of perfect virtues or vices to encounter their opposites. The encounter often produces a conversion in which the energy devoted to one extreme position is transferred to the other.

Under questioning from Leonella, Lorenzo paints a portrait of Ambrosio which sets him forth as just such a perfect being, but at the same time it is clear that he has paid the price of unnaturalness for his perfection:

"He is now thirty years old, every hour of which period has been passed in study, total seclusion from the world, and mortification of the flesh. Till these last three weeks, when He was chosen superior of the Society to which He belongs, He has never been on the outside of the Abbey-walls. . . . His knowledge is said to be the most profound, his eloquence the most persuasive. In the whole course of his life He has never been known to transgress a single rule of his order; The smallest stain is not to be discovered upon his character; and He is reported to be so strict an observer of Chastity, that He knows not in what consists the difference of Man and Woman. The common People therefore esteem him to be a Saint" (p. 17).

In accord with this report, after his sermon the congregation scramble to honour Ambrosio as if he were indeed a living saint.

Lewis' sardonic tone throughout the scene renders the religiosity contemptible, giving his readers the outlet of their own superiority to "goths" and ignorant Spanish Catholics. The credulity and misplaced
loyalty of the congregation deserves to be betrayed through Ambrosio's depravity, and the trust of the community is partly responsible for his boldness in embarking upon his career of sexual adventure. In fact, Lewis makes sport of the pliability of the matrons of Madrid and the ease with which Ambrosio may lose his virtue. Where there are no saints, it is folly to believe in them, but Lewis also recognizes that groundless faith is positively dangerous. He allows the usual ambivalent view of the problem. On the one hand, excessive credulity may be dismissed as a characteristic of gothic times or gothic manners, and may be approached solely in terms of certain prejudices and expectations. Yet, on the other hand, the problem of duality, of public morality and inner compulsions, is made so real and immediate that it cannot be relegated entirely to the alien realm of fantasy. After all, Ambrosio's predicament is psychologically plausible outside the preconceived limits of monastic evil. The epigraph of The Monk is drawn from Measure for Measure, and Ambrosio in many respects resembles the regent Angelo, who is a type of secular, governmental saint.

From the moment when Ambrosio's sainthood is invoked, The Monk moves toward his exposure and ruination. As John Berryman has observed, "the point is to conduct a remarkable man utterly to damnation." The speed of the movement is governed by what Berryman identifies as Lewis' "main insight": "It is surprising, after all, how long it takes--how difficult it is--to be certain of damnation." It is the search for certainty, at the subjectively accurate pace, that requires the novelist's painstaking attention, that keeps the reader perched on the edge of spiritual hopefulness, willing, perhaps, to follow either to salvation
or to damnation, but preferring the latter. As Ambrosio withdraws into the Abbey, Antonia exclaims, ironically and prophetically: "'He is separated from the world! . . . Perhaps I shall never see him more!'" (p. 20). Of course she is wrong, and it is the spectacle of Ambrosio's immersion in the world and befoulment by it that occupies the bulk of the novel.

After the requisite physiognomic description of Ambrosio (whose face "seemed to announce the Man equally unacquainted with cares and crimes") with its suggestive equivocations, we are shown the source of his self-destruction with little delay. Lewis points it out almost too insistently, as if, caught up in the importance of his psychological enterprise, he does not always know how best to use his enthusiasm and his real analytical powers. In a long foreshadowing speech, Lorenzo accurately assesses Ambrosio's likely behaviour:

... a Man who has passed the whole of his life within the walls of a Convent, cannot have found the opportunity to be guilty, even were He possessed of the inclination. But now, when, obliged by the duties of his situation, He must enter occasionally into the world, and be thrown into the way of temptation, it is now that it behoves him to show the brilliance of his virtue. The trial is dangerous; He is just at that period of life when the passions are most vigorous, unbridled, and despotic; His established reputation will mark him out to Seduction as an illustrious Victim; Novelty will give additional charms to the allurements of pleasure; and even the Talents with which Nature has endowed him will contribute to his ruin, by facilitating the means of obtaining his object. Very few would return victorious from a contest so severe (p. 21).

Without much conviction Lorenzo adds: "'By all accounts He is an exception to mankind in general, and Envy would seek in vain for a blot upon his character'" (p. 22). Leonella fears that Ambrosio's intolerance of sin will make him an unmerciful confessor, and Christobal agrees:
"Too great severity is said to be Ambrosio's only fault. Exempted himself from human feelings, He is not sufficiently indulgent to those of others; and though strictly just and disinterested in his decisions, his government of the Monks has already shown some proofs of his inflexibility" (p. 22).

For Ambrosio, as for his counterpart in Mrs. Radcliffe's work, Schedoni, the insistence on an inflexible regime for the community is an over-compensation for the anarchy of personal desires. That Lorenzo should suspect vulnerability to temptation in the monk without later heeding his own suspicion is less surprising if we notice the applicability of his remarks about Ambrosio to himself. In particular, it must be seen that Lorenzo is also "at that period of life when the passions are most vigorous, unbridled, and despotic," and, though he is more resistant to temptation than Ambrosio, simply because he is more familiar with it, he too is on trial.

It is a failure to realize and acknowledge the complexity of his own motives and desires that prevents Lorenzo from using fully the warnings he receives about Ambrosio and Antonia. Not only does he ignore his rational misgivings, but he is unable to integrate with them the clues that the irrational, including his own subconscious mind, sends up to him. He is so attached to the image of his essential decency that he cannot read any contrary message.

After the meeting with Antonia and Leonella and an interview during which Christobal blunders by implying that Lorenzo has gained financially from his sister Agnes' confinement in the convent of St. Clare, Christobal takes his leave, while Lorenzo remains in the "gothic obscurity of the Church." There he falls into a melancholy reverie:
He thought of his union with Antonia; he thought of the obstacles which might oppose his wishes; and a thousand changing visions floated before his fancy, sad 'tis true, but not unpleasing (p. 27).

The mixture of sadness and pleasure is a fair description of melancholy itself and, though Lewis' inexactness in assigning each feeling to the corresponding train of thought is disturbing, there is the fashionable emotion to account for it. Soon, however, the ambiguities become unavoidable. The reverie deepens into sleep, and Lorenzo dreams of subjects suggested by "the tranquil solemnity of his mind when awake." He recognizes the setting of the dream as the Church of the Capuchins where all is ready for a wedding feast:

[The Altar] was surrounded by a brilliant Company; and near it stood Antonia arrayed in bridal white, and blushing with all the charms of Virgin Modesty.

Half hoping, half fearing, Lorenzo gazed upon the scene before him. Sudden the door leading to the Abbey unclosed, and He saw, attended by a long train of Monks, the Preacher advance to whom He had just listened with so much admiration. He drew near Antonia.

'And where is the Bridegroom,' said the imaginary Friar.

Antonia seemed to look round the Church with anxiety. Involuntarily the Youth advanced a few steps from his concealment. She saw him; The blush of pleasure glowed upon her cheek; With a graceful motion of her hand She beckoned to him to advance. He disobeyed not the command.

She retreated for a moment; Then gazing upon him with unutterable delight;--'Yes!' She exclaimed, 'My Bridegroom! My destined delight!'

Destiny is disrupted by the appearance of "an Unknown," a huge, "swarthy" figure with "fierce and terrible" eyes. He breathes fire "and on his forehead was written in legible characters--'Pride! Lust! Inhumanity!'"

The monster attempts to ravish Antonia upon the altar, but before Lorenzo can spring to her aid the Church crumbles and the altar sinks, to be replaced by "an abyss vomiting forth clouds of flame." The monster
tries to drag Antonia with him into the pit; however, she is "animated by supernatural powers" and ascends angelically (though minus her gown) in a glorious apotheosis complete with heavenly choir and overwhelming radiance.

The most obvious function of this dream is to warn against a crime which, in this case, has not even been thought of by its perpetrator. Similar warning-dreams occur in The Romance of the Forest (where Adeline receives three of them at one time) and in The Old English Baron—for all its lack of interest in the irrational. Typically the warning is not very useful to the recipient because it is cryptic or incomplete or untimely. Lorenzo's dream presents another kind of difficulty, on account of its resemblance to real, rather than fictional, dreams. In real dreams, the dreamer may obtain knowledge he wants, but often this is mixed with awareness of painful things unacceptable to the conscious mind; the dream-process does not carefully distinguish between good advice and self-revelation. In Lorenzo's dream there is one prudential message: Take care of Antonia or she may be swept away. A more penetrating intelligence might even notice the clues that link "the Preacher" and "the Monster": the swarthy complexion, the burning eyes, the viciousness that Lorenzo has already foreseen as a trap set before the monk.

The prudential message, however, is blocked by the disturbing message of the unconscious. This second message concerns Lorenzo's confused desires. In dream as in waking, Lorenzo is unsure how to prosecute, whether to prosecute, his suit for Antonia's hand. The obstacles are as much internal and emotional as financial. His instinct is to hide. As in reality he is obliged to undertake complicated
negotiations before he dares to court Antonia, so in dream he hesitates to declare that he is her bridegroom. The circumstances are seconded by Lorenzo's mixed feelings, and the complexity of the latter is all the more remarkable because Lorenzo has not yet had a chance to form any serious doubts about Antonia.

In his dream he discovers the same emotional law that Ambrosio invokes to cast off Matilda, and to murder Antonia. This is the pattern of desire and revulsion with which Lewis is fascinated, the pattern that conjoins eros and death. According to this law of masculine rapacity, the virgin who has been "spoiled" (i.e., raped, in reality or in the mind) is suited only for death. If she was perfect before, she must be again perfected, and death is the means, the appropriate complement to the degradation of sex. Ambrosio imagines himself provoked by Antonia's angelic features, which he takes as a challenge; in Lorenzo's dream, Antonia becomes an angel in order to escape further debasement at the hands of a dark power. In both cases, however, the same assumptions run through the fantasies: there are whores and angels, they are treacherously yet conveniently interchangeable, there is no salvation—or normal sexual fulfilment—for ordinary women, or with ordinary women.

If we assume, as the early part of the sequence certainly invites us to do, that the dream represents latent wishes as well as fears (i.e., the whole range of internal possibilities), we understand why all Lorenzo's heroic measures to save Antonia are belated and ineffectual. This is not to say that Lorenzo would also like to rape her (the identification of the Monster is not quite so tenuous). Nevertheless, it is important to see how Lorenzo's dream exposes potentialities for
action and desire which Lorenzo, despite his claims to worldly experience, cannot admit in any man. To protect his confidence in the natural decency of human motives he must dismiss both dream-messages:

When He woke, He found himself extended upon the pavement of the Church. . . . For a while Lorenzo could not persuade himself that what He had just witnessed had been a dream, so strong an impression had it made upon his fancy. A little recollection convinced him of its fallacy (p. 29).

But his mind is still "fully occupied by the singularity of his dream" when he encounters the "Man wrapped up in his Cloak" who turns out to be Raymond. The dream's significance and its compelling reality are soon lost in the intrigues between Raymond and Lorenzo's sister, Agnes.

Only rarely do Lewis' characters learn to appreciate the control that irrational forces exercise over their lives. It is easier for them, and for Lewis' audience, to objectify and externalize such forces—to turn them into supernatural agents, for example, than to confront their presence within the personality. In fact, in The Monk the supernatural tends to have little real, intrinsic importance. Demons, ghosts and witches are superfluous mechanisms, sensational projections of internal struggles. They may deceive us temporarily into supposing that responsibility for the conflict lies elsewhere, but the supernatural trappings, though highly entertaining most of the time, are mainly a means of excusing the narrowness of the repressive mind. Thus, when Matilda uses witchcraft to entrap her jaded lover with the sight of Antonia at her bath, the voyeuristic image is only slightly more vivid and enticing than what the monk has already imagined without her aid. The external demons are unnecessary; the demons of the self are sufficient.
Yet, they are regularly denied. The obliviousness of life on the normal surface to the irrational, like the closely related idea of sexual calamity, is an idea that is multiplied continually in The Monk. For example, when Antonia receives from a gypsy fortune-teller an utterly transparent warning against "one more virtuous ... than belongs to Man to be" (p. 38), she suspects nothing: "The Gypsy's prediction had also considerably affected Antonia; But the impression soon wore off, and in a few hours She had forgotten the adventure, as totally as had it never taken place" (p. 39). Familiar gothic conventions make this omission natural: a gypsy witch may tell the truth, but an innocent, sensible, unimaginative girl is not supposed to listen. This supposition agrees with the inverse relations of Lewis' psychology: the more truth is spoken and the more urgent the need for it, the more quickly it must be ignored.

A similarly fatal obliviousness to the promptings of the irrational is the basis of the long tale of the Bleeding Nun which Raymond tells Lorenzo. The tale is interpolated at precisely the moment when Ambrosio is about to enjoy sex with Matilda for the first time. Tension between the two and within the monk has been building toward this moment, the atmosphere is heated with expectation of the "crime"; therefore, the interpolated episode creates a suspense which some readers have found tedious and puzzling. But the story of the Bleeding Nun has a positive value which is usually overlooked in the search for its sources and its flaws. It is, simultaneously, a parable of the shortcomings of modern enlightenment, a prolonged joke about the fulfilment of desire, and a morbid reflection upon the closeness of desire and death.
Faced with the hardened opposition of the Baroness Lindenberg, who has mistaken Raymond's love for Agnes for an interest in herself, the lovers must turn, like all victims of gothic parental interference, to unusual measures. Neither of them believes in the local legend of the Bleeding Nun, which contains the requisite elements of a "haunting" superstition modified to suit the themes of The Monk—monastic anomie, hypocrisy, lust, and treachery. But the legend does provide a convenient occasion for their elopement. This purely instrumental use of superstition resembles its treatment in gothic fiction itself, where folklore and pseudo-historical settings are employed for the sake of evoking artificial terror. Sometimes the old beliefs suddenly regain their vitality; that is how the lovers' plan turns into a sinister joke. Instead of Agnes, masquerading as the Bleeding Nun, the genuine Nun joins Raymond in his carriage and drives him on a terrifying flight across country. The hideous, rotten crone is the embodiment of erotic impulses gone wrong, and her nightly visits to Raymond's sick-bed where, vampire-like, she drains him of his physical and spiritual strength, indicate the persistence of sexual excess, not only as a curse against Agnes' family but as a debilitating force in Raymond's life. The necrophilic overtones of this odious union foreshadow the end of two love affairs in the crypt: Ambrosio's rape and murder of Antonia, and Agnes' horrific sufferings, with the child Raymond has given her. The magical and religious hocus-pocus with which the Wandering Jew exorcises the succubus cannot gloss over the basic sexual dilemma with false symbolism or sentimentality. Raymond must help remove the curse, but in his own generation he reinforces it with a new "crime." Even while he tells his
tale to Lorenzo he has set in motion the cycle of fatality which
requires Agnes, in turn, to be enslaved. The meaning of the elaborate
joke, of the Nun's example, of the pattern of sexual disaster, is lost
on Raymond. 16

Lewis does not give an explanation for Raymond's and Lorenzo's lack
of awareness of the irrational. The technical demands of a suspenseful
plot, complicated with dramatic ironies, do not permit their ignorance
to be relieved, and their lack of insight is consistent with the general
trend in gothic writing to diminish the conventionally heroic figures to
manniquins. 17 Moreover, we must suspect Lewis of a delight in luring
the reader into a judgmental trap. Raymond and Lorenzo, inasmuch as we
think of them at all, are fairly sympathetic characters, whereas Ambrosio,
for all his self-delusion and victimization, is a criminal. The reader
is forced to overlook in Lorenzo and Raymond the same denial of self that
he condemns in Ambrosio.

Lewis reserves close analysis for the extreme counterpart of the
decent average men—for Ambrosio, "the Man of Holiness." Because Ambro-
sio's suffering, like Raymond's, finally is referred to natural, psycho-
logical causes, Lewis wastes little time in delaying our awareness of
his duplicity. It is not the mere fact of Ambrosio's fragmented con-
sciousness that concerns him—though he plays upon it with a heavy hand
at first—but the history of the monk's flawed personality, the growth
of his obsession and its fulfilment. The drama of temptation and sur-
render is, in a sense, a secondary matter, for it is superimposed on the
examination, conducted almost from within, of a desolate soul. As The
Italian and Melmoth the Wanderer were to demonstrate, such an examination
has its own fascination, outside the framework of Faustian bargaining and theatrical spectacle.

As a lull in the painful scenes of antipathy between Ambrosio and Matilda, Lewis interjects a lengthy account of the perversion of the monk's character (p. 235 ff.). The account meshes well enough with earlier ones for us to be able to detect the dangers of matricide and incest towards which Ambrosio is about to rush. Ambrosio undergoes the kind of monastic miseducation already familiar from lurid anti-clerical fiction and from immediate, non-monastic experience. That the description of this system is fallacious or inaccurate is irrelevant, for the touching of conventional responses simply makes the acceptance of sensational, disturbing material easier by permitting that material to be regarded as alien. The essential problem in The Monk is neither religious nor political, but psychological.

Abandoned by an uncaring relation, Ambrosio is handed over to the monks, who will also betray him by refusing to give him proper emotional nourishment. He is educated in fear, through fear; he is made victim of all the devices of intimidation and persuasion which are traditionally at the monks' disposal, in order to become master of those tools himself. His natural virtues are plentiful, but those which are unnecessary for his duties in the Order, such as compassion and mercy, are suppressed, while vices, such as pride and envy, though not nurtured, are overlooked. His passionate nature is harnessed to the involuted routine of the monastery. He is converted into a perfect monk, and, therefore, a perfect goth.
Although many of the features of this account are part of the usual anti-clerical formula, Lewis elevates the whole pattern to the plane of personal tragedy. For this reason Ambrosio cannot be dismissed as a mere criminal, and Lewis retains the ability to play upon our uncertain feelings for him. Enumerating Ambrosio's strengths—his keen intellect, his impressive physique and bearing, his active and aggressive instincts—Lewis shows how they have been wasted. His upbringing by the Capuchins has inculcated a false concern for discipline, yet it has left his active faculties with no suitable outlet. Tremendous energy has been confined within an extremely limited sphere. The narcissistic life of the monastery precludes any socially useful pursuit and requires instead that the monks devote themselves to a spiritual regime which is an imposition upon the believer. The oppressive awareness of severe limitations, which is rendered even more terrifying in *Melmoth*, here turns the supernaturalism and the Faustian crises into an empty show; for the Church has stolen Ambrosio's soul before he can deal it away to Matilda or Satan. Thus there is established a pattern of self-destruction that is not as common as the Faustian bargain in gothic fiction but is a much stronger source of horrible irony: the false parent (the Church) so corrupts the child's soul that he can kill his true parent (Elvira) without feeling much remorse. The irony is accentuated by the child's eagerness for his own corruption and for the rewards of the eventual crime. By the time Ambrosio strangles Elvira, we are convinced that he would do so even if he knew her real identity, so powerful is his fascination with Antonia and his fear of detection.
The corruption of Ambrosio involves more than emotional impoverishment. In the world of *The Monk* sexual fatality is accompanied by sexual confusion which assumes three forms: object is confused with subject, masculine is confused with feminine, and health is confused with morbidity.

As is usual in his treatment of serious matters, Lewis first approaches the issue of sexual confusion through a joke. In the banter among Lorenzo, Christobal, and Leonella, it is alleged that Ambrosio is so pure of mind that he does not know the difference between man and woman; Leonella adds that Antonia too is uninformed, and there is some argument about whether she should be. Yet, even when Ambrosio has seen the difference, in the form of Matilda's bare breast, and has partaken of its advantages, his sexual preferences remain muddled. Citing evidence of "homoerotic emotions" in biographies of Lewis, his letters, and his writings, Elliott Gose argues that in *The Monk* "we shall find a study of the disintegration of an 'undecided character'," and nowhere is the undecidedness more pronounced than in Ambrosio's relations with Rosario/Matilda.

Here it is hard to keep genders and roles in order. Ambrosio is at first flattered by the admiration and charmed by the sweet manner of the gentle novice, Rosario, for whom he begins to feel something more than benign fellowship. Though highly sentimentalized, the affection is clearly homosexual as well as filial; Ambrosio imagines the "boy" as his son, but the main attraction is Rosario's effeminacy. Yet, when Rosario reveals herself to be Matilda (hers is a stock story of impossible infatuation), the reversals are compounded. Matilda is bold, enterprising,
ruthless; she is unmistakably female and desirable, but her 'behaviour is not feminine. As she scorns Ambrosio's womanish fears of the demonic and his hesitancy, the monk's misgivings grow; he regrets the disappearance of the quiet, subservient, chaste Rosario and the substitution of the aggressive, domineering, sexually potent Matilda, who actually desires the same pleasure that Ambrosio cannot quite justify for himself. Like Lorenzo, Ambrosio appears to have no middle choice between the whore and the angel; only the shifting, blending opposites are left for him in his world of extremes. That Lewis manages to delve beneath that appearance—as well as to affirm it—is a sign both of his own divided affinities and of the dual perspective common to the ambivalent mode of the gothic. The dark inner life with its uncomfortably recognizable fantasies and obsessions is enjoyed and dismissively analyzed at the same time.

Ambrosio feels compelled to loathe the very object on which he stakes his reputation and his prospects for salvation—psychical and theological. Once in his possession, the dazzling prize immediately becomes a corrupt thing. Lewis further aggravates the dilemma, under the guise of anti-Catholic ridicule, by identifying Matilda with the image of the Madonna that has been the object of the monk's constant adoration. But since Ambrosio's worship is a sublimation of physical love, an attachment to the symbolic image, not the idea symbolized, he is unable to distinguish the icon from the fleshly model. And, given the monastic context, Lewis' readers would be satisfied, even pleased, with Ambrosio's confusion. However, for Ambrosio, the treachery of his delusion is the real, intolerable fact. Now incarnate, the Virgin is
"the Prostitute" Matilda. Lewis' narrative voice, however, cannot resist commenting on the unreasonableness of Ambrosio's submission to such fantastic reversals as the monk rips the icon from the wall of his cell and spurns it, the narrator remarks:

Unfortunate Matilda. Her Paramour forgot, that for his sake alone She had forfeited her claim to virtue; and his only reason for despising her was, that She had loved him much too well (p. 244).

That is not the only reason, but it is the primary one. Compliant and victimized alike, women are associated with the uncleanness, the unholleness of Ambrosio's passion; if they accede to his wishes—which hardly can be satisfied—they condemn themselves.

This disjunction of desire and esteem is a classic subject of psychoanalytical inquiry, but Lewis is mainly interested in its pathology for the tortuous fantasy life that it leads to. Lewis' evident delight in sudden reversals, identification of opposites, and gender ambiguities is more consistent with the methods of sexual fantasy than case history, and most of Ambrosio's assumptions, delusions, or fantasies are those of a male protagonist in erotic fiction.

The prevalent delusion results from the practical impossibility, especially for a man who has denied his irrational, instinctual side, of distinguishing between seduction and projection. This problem arises, in particular, in trying to assess the motives and behaviour of Matilda, and the reader must share it with Ambrosio because Lewis himself is so undecided on this point. Ambrosio and the narrator regularly bring up certain questions: Is Matilda's magic at the service of erotic mastery or destruction? Is it real magic, or is it the prompting of Ambrosio's starved imagination? If Matilda is a witch or an agent of Satan, does
that release Ambrosio from blame for whatever crimes she causes him to commit? And does she really cause him to do anything or does she simply abet his crimes?

Lewis supplies inconsistent, equivocal answers. The accusation that Matilda is the lure in a great demonic plan, for example, comes after all from the devil's lips as he tortures Ambrosio with the thought of his own foolishness. For most of the narrative, Matilda's thinly concealed autobiography--the story of Rosario's sister Julia and her desperate passion for a man betrothed to another--is equally plausible. The facts of Ambrosio's experience, and of his career as we follow it, fit either explanation. And in either case, great expertise, almost prescience, is apparent. The snares that Matilda throws in the way of Ambrosio are numerous, and they are fashioned as if with his weaknesses and his secret internal life in mind. First Matilda carefully plays on the mystique surrounding Rosario because it piques the curiosity of the monk. When she has revealed her true identity, the sophistical arguments with which she urges their union depend upon the defects in his character, particularly his pride and vanity, which Matilda, like his monkish teachers, persists in treating as if they were virtues. The whole incident of the snake-bite, with Matilda's sacrifice and threatened suicide, culminates in the "accidental" baring of her breast, exploiting the most important of Ambrosio's fetishes. On her deathbed she places his hand on her bosom, which is still "the seat of honour, truth, and chastity," and the monk, "confused, embarrassed, and fascinated . . . withdrew it not, and felt her heart throb under it" (p. 90). So great is Matilda's allure, so thorough her familiarity with even his unacknowledged
impulses, that Ambrosio seems justified in believing that she controls the circumstances of temptation, that she is the instigator, not the convenient object, of his dangerous obsession.

The reader might be forced to concur in that belief if Ambrosio did not transfer it to Antonia. Lewis invites us to consider Matilda as a femme fatale, but Antonia is so perfectly guileless that the projective nature of Ambrosio's loathing is self-evident. In addition, the accurately duplicated cycle of conversion—the Madonna to the Prostitute, the angelic, chaste Antonia to the Venus of the bath—is symptomatic of a tendency that is peculiar to Ambrosio.

The fantasy that women compel his desire dominates the monk's very diction. Notice, for example, the verbs of coercion or entrapment in this comparison of Matilda and Antonia:

Matilda gluts me with enjoyment even to loathing, forces me to her arms, apes the Harlot, and glories in her prostitution. Disgusting! Did she know the inexpressible charm of Modesty, how irresistibly it enthralls the heart of Man, how firmly it chains him to the Throne of Beauty, She never would have thrown it off (pp. 242-243.).

Matilda's "lustful favours" and Antonia's "inexpressible charm of Modesty" are thus equated, not contrasted, through a common capacity for mastering Ambrosio's imagination.

The pattern of sharp, ironic reversals prepares us for the transference of Ambrosio's aggression to its objects. Once again it is a cultural stereotype, sharpened by the cynical narrative voice, that supplies the first element of the pattern. The narrator examines the monk's chances for varying his steady diet of Matilda, and finds him both fortunate and unfortunate:
Above all the Women sang forth his praises loudly, less influenced by devotion than by his noble countenance, majestic air, and well-turned graceful figure. The Abbey-door was thronged with Carriages from morning to night; and the noblest and fairest Dames of Madrid confessed to the Abbot their secret peccadilloes. The eyes of the luxurious Friar devoured their charms: Had his Penitents consulted those Interpreters, He would have needed no other means of expressing his desires. For his misfortune, they were so strongly persuaded of his continence, that the possibility of his harbouring indecent thoughts never once entered their imaginations. The climate's heat, 'tis well known, operates with no small influence upon the constitutions of the Spanish Ladies... the Friar was little acquainted with the depravity of the world; He suspected not, that but few of his Penitents would have rejected his addresses (pp. 239-240).

Once Ambrosio loses the innocent belief in the exclusiveness of his lustful thoughts, his suspicions surpass the narrator's. All women become fair game for his imagination. Rather than face the real extent of his passion and the real process of dream fulfilment by which his imagination tries to serve it, Ambrosio reverses the subject-object relation, and supposes that the women he most desires seek to provoke him. After one sight of Antonia, he is stricken with desire for her—as was Lorenzo—and, in his cell, he is "pursued by Antonia's image" (p. 242); already it is she who has turned the hunter. When Antonia, accompanied by a reluctant Leonella, comes to beg that Ambrosio bring comfort to her pious mother, who is desperately ill, the monk's immediate reaction derives from this rationalization and from his experience with Matilda:

"So!" thought the Monk; "Here we have a second Vincen­tio della Ronda. Rosario's adventure began thus," and He wished secretly, that this might have the same conclusion (p. 241).

Lewis promotes this confusion of subject and object, especially as applied to Antonia, with the effect that the reader is placed discon­certingly close to the monk's state of extreme arousal. He presents
Antonia's innocent beauty with an odd combination of sentimentality and prurience—perhaps not so odd in light of the events in Ambrosio's mind. It is Ambrosio's active dreaming imagination that converts Antonia from innocent to whore, yet the reader shares in the final, explicit image of her, the maddening purity of her form. This is a trick of pornographic sensationalism—making the reader an eager witness of what he might otherwise condemn—but it is also a key to Lewis' vision of the elusiveness, and pervasiveness, of the darker impulses in men, and a symptom of the deep split in ambivalent gothicism between a sympathetic and a narrowly moralistic treatment of problems of evil and irrationality.25

For Lewis, and for his characters, all the sexual confusions end in the tomb. Not only is this the imaginative terminus for sensationalism (as Burke foresaw), but it is the appropriate realization of the obsessions and denials on which the emotional life of The Monk is based. If, as in most pornography, desire does not conclude with any single event or succession of events, if there is in fact no satiation, then the body appears a tyrant which may be indulged or rebelled against. Lewis pursues the horror of this perception beyond the monotony it produces in pornography, and his treatment of its implications is considerably more complex. Sometimes indulgence and rebellion are contained in the same working out of the problem. Sex becomes a process of mastery and of extending power, a process which may culminate with the death, and thus the perfect possession, of the partner; or it becomes a continuing occasion for self-punishment, for embracing that which, like the Bleeding Nun, is born of desire and is capable of destroying desire by laying waste to the body.
In either case, death and disease are shown as necessary comple-
ments, and instruments, of passion. It is logical, therefore, that the 
union of Agnes and Raymond should produce a putrid, loathsome thing, 
scarcely an infant (another complete transformation), and that Agnes 
should have to watch it starve to death and decompose. Having come as 
close to this fact as he can, to the point of avid interest in decay, 
Lewis imbues Ambrosio with the same fascination as a last desperate 
protection. Ambrosio thinks of the site of his rape of Antonia (in the 
crypts beneath the convent and monastery) as an additional prop for his 
resolution. Here they are removed from the surface world of reputations 
and decorum. Here they are safe from interference, but only because 
they are surrounded by the deathly and unlovely. When all reassurance 
fails, the monk takes his cue from the nature of the place, which is 
also the nature of his soul.

What is more disturbing than Lewis' predeliction for gruesome 
detail (e.g., his prolonging of the death of Ambrosio) is the sense of 
blind doom. The morbid association of sex and death includes both pas-
sion and the denial of passion; they are indifferently rewarded, and 
Lewis does not suggest any way out of the impasse he has created.

Evidence of the impasse, however, is everywhere in The Monk. The 
reader searches in vain for some emotional or moral still point, such as 
a nostalgic goth would readily provide, for some point where the endless 
joking is suspended. Instead, Lewis gives only the empty forms of 
sentimentality, stability, and heroism. This might appear to indicate a 
lack of seriousness or concentration in Lewis' method, and indeed the 
frivolous, sportive tone of The Monk is unmistakeable. But the tone is
also characteristic of the whole gothic fictional enterprise, and particularly of its divided purposes. Like Walpole's several self-censorship devices in Otranto, what Drake called the "sportive gothic" becomes in Lewis' hands a means of distancing the pain inherent in his sensational treatment of gothic themes. Yet, despite such marginal allowances for dismissing the central experience of The Monk, there is no settled, comforting idea of what the imaginary past should mean. Lewis parodies romantic fictional conventions, including the notion of gothic barbarity, while exploiting them. He contrasts gothic adventure and colour with gothic bleakness, balancing the foreignness and absurdity of his characters with the desolation of their familiar inner world.

The events of the novel's "resolution" make this technique plain. For example, the mission that frees Agnes is accompanied by mob sadism of a typically gothic brutality, intensity and obscenity. Lewis sets our satisfaction with the rescue and sympathy with the happiness of the reunited lovers against the background of the mob's irrationality and the protagonists' inability to restrain it. Even our well-founded contempt for the Prioress of St. Clare's cannot quite justify the manner of her murder.

Lewis similarly undercuts the romantic plot-lines. Antonia's death in the arms of Lorenzo is heightened by sentimental, melodramatic touches, but these do not conceal a haste to get rid of her in order to simplify the system of alliances, in which she can have no part. In accord with her image of purity and selflessness, Antonia greets death with graceful acceptance; she understands the rules of courtship well enough to realize that she is "damaged goods" and cannot marry Lorenzo. However, Lewis'
declaration that, "deprived of honour and branded with shame, Death was to her a blessing" (p. 392), is disturbingly similar to the rationalizations that might occur to Ambrosio, or even to Lorenzo. Having been tainted by the lower world of sexual violence, Antonia is no longer fit to live on the surface.

After Matilda and Ambrosio have been captured, there is a spate of match-making and realigning of affections that requires an embarrassing amount of exposition and contrivance. The beautiful Virginia is elevated from the ludicrous band of nuns whom Lorenzo had discovered trapped in the crypts. She will replace Antonia as Lorenzo's bride. The match has been promoted by Agnes and the Duke de Medina, and Virginia's name displays her principal qualification. In effect, she is a cure for Lorenzo's love-sickness and grief, just as the return of Agnes, who is flattered to learn that her lover has nearly pined away for her sake, immediately leads to Raymond's recovery. Justice is meted out to the nuns, marriages are concluded, and Lorenzo's love is transferred, in short order. We are told that "Antonia's image was gradually effaced from his bosom; and Virginia became sole Mistress of that heart, which She well deserved to possess without a Partner"; the fluidity and superficiality of Lorenzo's feelings makes the persecution and murder of Antonia seem trivial. After we have been drawn to the depths of depravity and disintegration, the contentment of marriage is an unconvincing prospect, and those who are satisfied with it suddenly appear shallow.

Unlike Reeve or Radcliffe, Lewis does not rest when the felicitous arrangements have been made. He continues the degradation of Ambrosio to the utmost point, so that it is the spectacle of his hopeless
suffering with which we are left. Even the meagre consolation of fame is gone; while the devil bears Ambrosio away, his reputation, his crimes, his satanic rescue fade from public interest and he is soon forgotten. The gorgeous boyish demon who first appeared to Ambrosio, at Matilda's summons, now stands forth as the jaded, hideous Lucifer and exposes the actual extent of Ambrosio's crimes: incest and the murder of his mother and sister. Lucifer's version of the testing of Ambrosio is suspect, since it may be intended to aggravate Ambrosio's mental tortures, and the ironies which the devil unravels are rather mechanical and superfluous. The landscape in which this final scene occurs, however, suggests the means of interpreting it. Ambrosio has exchanged the lush, perfumed garden of the Capuchin Abbey, where he courted Rosario/Matilda, for a sterile wilderness, broken by cliffs and dry ravines. In such a place, the devil's jesting commentary is hardly necessary. Incapable of recognizing the aridity and treachery of his inner life, Ambrosio has been overtaken by its outward manifestation.

Thus, the scene of Ambrosio's suffering serves as a lucid, concrete representation of the tendency of his whole career and of the ultimate condition of his soul. However, by depicting the final agonies in nearly mythic terms (there are obvious allusions to Prometheus and the Creation), Lewis reminds us that Ambrosio's story, though of immediate, compelling interest, is also a means of gaining access to disturbing, painful themes.

In most of Ann Radcliffe's novels we discover themes that overlap the themes of *The Monk*: the misuse of the irrational, the conflict between feeling and common sense, the oppressive exercise of authority,
the destructive power of the erotic. On the other hand, two characteristics of Radcliffe's method distinguish it from Lewis'.

First, as we noted in the previous chapter, Radcliffe expresses her ambivalence toward the imaginary gothic world through a pattern of confrontation in which familiar values are not totally vindicated nor are alien values totally condemned. In *The Monk* the narrative voice occasionally gives enlightened commentary—or what passes for it—but there is no real sense of conflict between mismatched cultures; on the contrary, the narrator eventually presents the whole world of *The Monk* as atavistic. For Radcliffe the meeting with the gothic ancestors must be dramatic; the confrontational pattern requires the active participation of a visitor or representative from the reader's environment. Often the visitor is a representative of a familiar fictional type as well; she is, for example, a sentimental heroine transported to a realm where brutality is as much appreciated as fine sentiment.

Because the female protagonist usually is a creature of exquisite sensibility, Radcliffe's work shows an understanding of the nostalgic mode and includes many of its common elements. This additional latitude also separates Radcliffe from Lewis. For Lewis, sensationalism is mainly an interest in forbidden psychic territory and the grosser features of physical suffering. Damnation is universal, the ideal merely an illusion. In this climate there is no object for nostalgic recollection. In contrast, Radcliffe approaches her darker perceptions more by suggestion than by sensationalism, and her palette of strong feelings consists not only of imaginary fear and erotic compulsion but also of nature worship, filial piety, and love of the sublime, feelings consistent with
a nostalgic rendition of the gothic. Consequently, there are long idyllic interludes in many of Radcliffe's novels, such as Adeline's stay with the family of La Luc in *The Romance of the Forest*, Ellena's period of refuge at the Convent of the *Santa della Pieta* in *The Italian*, and Emily's early domestic routine in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. For a time the heroines seem to have found a way back from the terror that encircles them, but the idyll ends and the figures within it are altered: La Luc's son is imprisoned, the Abbess turns out to have little protective power, Emily's parents die and she is left to the guardianship of her foolish, unfeeling aunt. Nostalgic attitudes have some play in the novels, but they remain a limited, secondary mode, because they are the raw material for the victims' misapprehensions.

Nostalgia helps to account for the prudential moralism, the extensive scenic descriptions, and the sporadic attempts at pseudo-historical detail, elements of the novels which are less accessible to the present-day reader.

What is still accessible is the central problem within the novels, for which the solutions that nostalgia offers are inadequate. It is natural, however, that one mode of response should be nostalgic, for the problem is a loss of identity and of family connection, the disruption of the secure boundaries of childhood, and any means that may restore the old situation must be tried. For Clara Reeve, as we have seen, return to the past is a way of redressing present grievances by imposing an ideal structure on the loose historical framework. For Radcliffe, ideal structures are fragile at best; return to the alien past is a way of creating personal reality and developing resistance to an evil which
is not restricted to the past, and which cannot be easily evaded.

Recognizing the true nature of that evil is the ultimate difficulty for the protagonists; they must follow a process of detection in which some of the suspenseful devices are entirely gratuitous, like the famous veiled "portrait" in The Mysteries of Udolpho,\(^29\) and others are the result of manipulation, like Schedoni's deception of the credulous Vivaldi in The Italian.\(^30\) But the most immediate emotional need is for parents and protection. Fathers and mothers die, or are lost, or prove false. In any event, the children are thrown back on their own slim resources of fortitude and wisdom, in a setting which they suddenly perceive to be hostile.

There are numerous surrogate parents but they invariably fail to perform their duties satisfactorily; many of them have villainous aims for their young charges, while others reverse the relationship between parent and child. Mme. Cheron, later Mme. Montoni, in Udolpхо, is an example of the latter sort of false parent. A lack of discernment delivers both herself and her niece, Emily, into Montoni's power; when he imprisons her for refusing to relinquish her fortune, she becomes increasingly dependent on Emily's cheerfulness for consolation; she herself has no strength to share.

In The Romance of the Forest treacherous false parents multiply; Adeline is given over to a succession of them. First there is D'Aunoy, whom she believes during most of the narrative to be her real father but who has been given custody of Adeline by the Marquis de Montalt, her real father's murderer. D'Aunoy consigns her to a convent; there she is subjected to the tyrannical designs of a false mother, the Abbess (see
pp. 195-196 above). From the convent Adeline is taken to D'Aunoy's lair where she is eventually handed over to the outlaw La Motte over whom Montalt has control. La Motte develops genuine fatherly feelings for Adeline, yet he is insecure and powerless; the Marquis holds the threat of blackmail over La Motte, and reluctantly he plays procurer for Montalt, delivering Adeline to him, ostensibly for rape, in fact for murder. For a while it also appears that the Marquis is Adeline's real father, and if Adeline is confused by D'Aunoy's motives, when she believes him to be her father, we are even more puzzled by the Marquis' intentions until we discover the mistake that has concealed his identity. Adeline is hampered in penetrating this maze of substitutions by her overly trusting nature. We learn that "confidence in the sincerity and goodness of others was her weakness" and receive an example of this confidence from her own account of her first sight of Paris:

"Every countenance was here animated either by business or pleasure, every step was airy, and every smile was gay. All the people appeared like friends; they looked and smiled at me; I smiled again, and wished to have told them how pleased I was. How delightful, said I, to live surrounded by friends!" 32

But friends are scarcer than Adeline thinks at first. It is the fate of Radcliffe's heroines to be denied friendship as often as they are denied parental care. Sometimes, indeed, these losses are combined, as when Ellena, in The Italian, is separated from her new-found friend Olivia before she can discover that the delightful woman, who has suffered in order to defend her, is her real mother. Of course, the loss of friendship provides another occasion for the expressions of fashionable melancholy in which the female protagonists love to indulge. On a less superficial level, however, the loss is part of the general pattern
of isolation which sets up the conditions necessary for persecuting the heroine.

The parent-as-persecutor is the darkest, most complex figure in Radcliffe's gothic complement. Certainly the type had been established in Richardson's *Clarissa* and in the contemporary French domestic melodrama with which Radcliffe was undoubtedly familiar, but her development of it is remarkable for depth of sympathetic psychological insight and for balance maintained between the persecutor's and the victim's sense of being trapped in the situation. With the cruel Marquis of *The Sicilian Romance*, of whom Catherine Morland is presumably thinking when she spins her fantasies about General Tilney, Radcliffe begins a series of parental tyrants which culminates in *The Italian*. Here she attempts her fullest, most mature treatment of the relations between parents and children; the novel is centred on the subject, the various episodes and relationships reflecting various aspects of the conflict.

But Radcliffe's sense of decorum, which is an instrument of the nostalgic mode in the forming of her novels, prevents her from representing the conflict directly. There is an evident reluctance to depict parents as actual persecutors, if some means of deflecting their responsibility can be found. In *The Romance of the Forest* this is another reason for the multiplication of false fathers who, in some fashion, turn out to be involved in the persecution of the heroine. The reader is brought to the edge of a disturbing recognition—that parents may resent, thwart, destroy their children—only to be stopped short by the same ironic reversals that save Adeline from utter disappointment. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the fallibility of a father is similarly
tendered and then withdrawn: misconstruing certain relics which her father has asked her to destroy after his death, Emily suspects that he has had a disastrous love affair, that he too is a sexual being, and we share that growing, uncomfortable suspicion until we learn with Emily the innocuous truth.  

In The Italian there is also an evasion of the domestic conflicts. Parallels between the power of parents and the power of the Church define the natural obligations of subjects (e.g., children) and authority figures, but they also transfer the idea of crimes against sexuality from one conventional area—the family—where the fact of persecution is harder to confront, to another area—the monastery—where such crimes are popularly supposed to be common.

The transfer is so successful that it is liable to cause readers to overlook the connection between Vivaldi's parents and the lovers' misfortunes. We forget that the haughtiness and vindictiveness of the Marchesa set in motion the scheme against Ellena because Schedoni appropriates the scheme, and its rewards, for himself. The monumental scale of his ambition, power, criminality, and final suffering sustains our emotional tension and our interest. We are released only when the last obscurity lifts, only when the cycle of self-destruction ends with the detection and trial of Schedoni.

Radcliffe aids this concentration on Schedoni not only by magnifying his proportions and deepening the mystery that surrounds him, but also by diminishing the effective opposition. Though somewhat more resilient than her typical gothic sisters, Ellena remains a passive object for others to manipulate—a fugitive or a prisoner. Vivaldi is as ineffec-
tual and credulous as Schedoni thinks he is, hardly capable of saving himself, let alone acting heroically. 37

The process of diminishment affects Vivaldi's parents even more. The Marchese scarcely appears until his miserable wife dies of chagrin, somehow reconciled with her son without need for repentance; even then, he merely serves to dispense material rewards to the survivors. Radcliffe implies that it was an imbalance between husband and wife that gave the Marchesa scope for her interference, thus diffusing responsibility for her maliciousness. If only the man would take his proper place, it seems, the domestic conflict would be smoothed over.

There is good reason for weakening the parents' role as persecutors. The Vivaldis are deprived of magnitude, but also of culpability. They are not genuine criminals, as Schedoni undoubtedly is. They must be saved, with moral standing relatively unhurt, for the mechanical niceties of the resolution, when, like Clara Reeve, Radcliffe tries to climb out of the gothic darkness into the bright circle of domesticity. The nostalgic impulse is to purify the parents, as it is to idealize the past; in both cases there is a securing of identity. Thus, the awful fate of Schedoni is almost left behind, except that it looms larger than anything else in The Italian. In this matter of proportion and impressiveness, at least, Radcliffe does not improve upon Lewis' practice. 38

In effect, all potential for criminal tyranny in parenthood is conferred upon Schedoni. There is a literal representation of the transfer, in the form of the Marchesa's commission to Schedoni. At first she simply consults with her confessor, sharing anxieties about her son's welfare. As the extent of those anxieties becomes plain, as Schedoni
feeds her fears and antagonism, the necessary solution appears.

Radcliffe's insight into the developing alliance is subtle. It is a measure of the degree to which Schedoni stands for the evil latent within his patroness that the early planning is a mutual affair. Already complicit in one murder and greedy for the power that the Marchesa can give him, Schedoni draws on a ready supply of evil to advise her. What he shows her, however, is the image of her own desire. It does not matter—except for the Marchesa's sense of righteousness—that she does not know, or care to know, what shape the conspiracy will eventually assume. Once her dark purpose has been given over to a will that is not opposed by the usual decent restraints (i.e., a truly gothic will), it is set free in the world with a tremendous power of its own.

But the process does not stop with projection, with the monk taking up wishes which the lady does not acknowledge. The real terror of the novel arises from the exaggeration or enlargement of those wishes in their fulfilment. As the conspiracy gains momentum, the measures needed to keep it going become more and more extreme, until the crime turns against Schedoni and is too enormous for him to handle. This process of enlargement and exaggeration explains the relationship between Schedoni and the Marchesa: the more purely gothic figure is a distorted, magnified image of the more familiar, less barbarous one. At the same time, the more purely gothic figure is an outlet for the unrealized forces in the more familiar, less barbarous world.

That relationship is compounded in The Italian; successive tyrants are themselves tyrannized. If Schedoni acts out an exaggerated version of the Marchesa's evil impulses, beyond her effective control, the Church
hierarchy of which he is a part acts out an even more severely exaggerated version of his own dreams of power. The Church, and particularly the Inquisition, is the ultimate locus of extreme parental oppression. It is both a parody and an extension of the family, but of the fragmented family, the family as an "assemblage of strangers."

Envy and malice are the unnatural principles of life in such a family, and even a good daughter of the Church like Ellena cannot but recognize them. As she approaches the convent of San Stefano, even the gothic architecture of the place seems significant:

... the tall west window of the cathedral with the spires that overtopped it; the narrow pointed roofs of the cloisters; angles of the insurmountable walls, which fenced the garden from the precipices below, and the dark portal leading into the chief court; each of these, seen at intervals beneath the gloom of cypress and spreading cedar, seemed as if menacing the unhappy Ellena with hints of future suffering.

The darkness and narrowness of the building corresponds exactly to the qualities of the life within. Hearing the strains of the vesper-service wafting over the silent air, Ellena tries to summon up an image of sisterly harmony:

She indulged a hope that they would not be wholly insensible to her sufferings, and that she should receive some consolation from sympathy as soft as these tender-breathing strains appeared to indicate.

But her hope is destroyed by the "symbols of the disposition of the inhabitants." The disposition itself, the desolate inner life, is especially threatening:

... as she passed through the refectory where the nuns, just returned from vespers, were assembled, their inquisitive glances, their smiles and busy whispers, told her, that she was not only an object of curiosity, but of suspicion, and that little sympathy could be expected from hearts which
even the offices of hourly devotion had not purified from
the malignant envy, that taught them to exalt themselves
upon the humiliation of others. With mention of humiliation and "malignant envy" we return to the
conventional gothic wisdom about monastic psychology: a community of
frustrated, sexually neutral narcissists cannot bear the sight of any
vestiges of freedom or sexual potency in new arrivals; everyone must be
reduced to the same ghostly state. For all its triteness, this notion
has a wider importance. If the Abbess usually acts in loco parentis,
here she does so explicitly; for the Abbess of San Stefano is in league
with the Marchesa like Schedoni, and her efforts to bully Ellena into
taking the veil are simply an answer to the Marchesa's desire that the
girl be eliminated as a sexual object.

The connection between the ascetic mentality of the monastic and
the repressive mentality of the parent-tyrant is shown most clearly in
Schedoni. Like Ambrosio, he is unable to accept the fact of his own
sensuality; Schedoni, however, has better justification, for sensuality
has led him to ruin. For the sake of his brother's power and his wife,
he has plotted and murdered, yet he has gained little except grinding
remorse and a need for seclusions. As a result, he too develops a
belief that only extreme positions exist: there is the life of sensual-
ity and passion, which is disastrous, and there is the life without
those pressures, which is equally insufferable because it is without
delight.

It is logical that Schedoni become a monk, for he has cut himself
off as much as possible from the physical world. There are several outward signs of this retreat. Schedoni resembles an earlier Radcliffean
outcast, Montoni, in his total lack of sensitivity to natural beauty or sublimity. The reaction to scenery is an index of the vigour of the imagination, and the contrast between the monk and Ellena, as they ride toward Spalatro's hideout, is remarkable:

To the harassed spirits of Ellena the changing scenery was refreshing, and she frequently yielded her cares to the influence of majestic nature. Over the gloom of Schedoni, no scenery had, at any moment, power; the shape and paint of external imagery gave neither impression or colour to his fancy. He contemned the sweet illusions, to which other spirits are liable, and which often confer a delight more exquisite, and not less innocent, than any, which deliberate reason can bestow.  

It is as a devotee of "deliberate reason"—in the sense of self-control—that Schedoni wants to appear. He is singularly observant of the rules of his order, and does not spare himself any occasion for confession and mortification. The other monks watch this last peculiarity of his conduct with mingled awe and suspicion, for his severity makes him both a rigorous and an intolerant "father" of the house. He seeks to extirpate the minor weaknesses around him that remind him of the great torturing weakness within.

He cannot succeed because, like the Marchesa, he has performed a deed whose consequences he does not fully control. He is as much a servant as a master of passion. Paradoxically, it is when Schedoni seems most like a parent, and, therefore, most capable of controlling the child, that his nerve fails. and the powers of reason and detection lead him astray. Entering Ellena's bedroom in Spalatro's hideout with the intent of murdering her, Schedoni discovers, just as his dagger is about to pierce her breast, a locket which would declare Ellena his own daughter. He recoils at the sign and spares her.
The scene is dramatically impressive, the sequel psychologically skilful. Circumstances of the most terrible kind invite a strong emotional response: a father has almost murdered his daughter to satisfy a wicked, cold woman's vendetta; in addition, certain features of the scene—Schedoni's dagger, Ellena's recumbent, fragile innocence—suggest that the monk has narrowly avoided a sexual attack. We have been brought to the edge of an unbearable spectacle. Yet, Radcliffe refrains from making Schedoni's revulsion a matter of conscience or an occasion for an abrupt change of heart. Schedoni is a secretly power-mad man, and a conscience, though he cannot evade it entirely, is mainly an encumbrance for him. What horrifies him is that he has nearly destroyed his best chance for securing the influence that he desires. He saves Ellena, not for the sake of compassion, but for the sake of greed; he is eager to see her married to young Vivaldi in order to exploit his connection with her. In abetting one unnatural parent (i.e., the Marchesa) he has unwittingly worked against his own unnatural parental feelings—or lack of feelings.

The rather ponderous ironies of the third volume of the novel originate in this strange reversal. Schedoni's peasant guide acts as if he were aware of the monk's secrets, as if he were playing an elaborate game of cat-and-mouse with his master, but his most stinging remarks are probably inadvertent. The monk believes himself exposed as a child-murderer by this underling; however, there is no safe way of testing the man's knowledge without further giving himself away. A harsher torture is Ellena's puzzled yet genuine gratitude for Schedoni's aid. The more forcefully she expresses this natural, filial affection, the
more Schedoni is compelled to admit his unworthiness to receive it.

It is from the obscure region of memory and buried deeds, a region partly restored to mind by mistaken recognition of Ellena, that Schedoni's nemesis comes. Nemesis is aided by a false sense of security, a failure of perception. Schedoni does not believe in forces that are greater, more obscure, more inscrutable than his own, he does not expect to be victimized; therefore, when he finally is made a victim, he suffers because he is emotionally unprepared for fear. In the chain of oppressors and controllers, he has power over Ellena and Vivaldi and the monks of his order, but he does not have as much power or awareness as he needs. It is appropriate that he be detected by the agents of the Inquisition. Not only is it the severe parental authority within the Church, but its secret workings and manipulations are even more devious than Schedoni's. The same lack of susceptibility to the sublime that we notice in his response to nature prevents Schedoni from realizing the impending danger.

Radcliffe shows that lack of imagination and sensibility is as dangerous as excessive sensibility, and she uses the main antagonists, Vivaldi and Schedoni, to prove the point. Her depiction of the Inquisition, for example, is vague, in comparison to later uses of the institution in gothic fiction, but the vagueness is deliberate, for it gives us the opportunity to watch Radcliffe demonstrate what she has discovered about artificial terror.

Schedoni is impressed with the Inquisitors, of course, but he also underestimates the extent of their network: he is a reasonable man, who does not exaggerate dangers in order to obtain the artificial thrill of
fear.

In contrast, Vivaldi, as we learn in the first volume, is a follower of Burke's principles. In her understanding of his vulnerable sensibility, Radcliffe exhibits an understanding of the process of reading gothic fiction. Thus she accounts for Vivaldi's decision to continue his search at Paluzzi:

... he once more determined to ascertain, if possible, the true nature of this portentous visitant. ... He was awed by the circumstances which had attended the visitations of the monk ... by the suddenness of his appearance, and departure; by the truth of his prophecies; and, above all, by the solemn event which had verified his last warning; and his imagination, thus elevated by wonder and painful curiosity, was prepared for something above the reach of common conjecture, and beyond the accomplishment of human agency. His understanding was sufficiently strong and clear to teach him to detest many errors of opinion, that prevailed about him ... and, in the usual state of mind, he probably would not have paused for a moment on the subject before him; but his passions were now interested and his fancy awakened, and, though he was unconscious of this propensity, he would, perhaps, have been somewhat disappointed, to have descended suddenly from the region of fearful sublimity, to which he had soared—the world of terrible shadows—to the earth, on which he daily walked, and to an explanation simply natural.46

Radcliffe purveys simply natural explanations. That is her way of reducing the gothic darkness to a system, of returning her protagonists and her readers fairly unscathed to the immediate realm of common sense. For the most part the result is supposed to be educational: Vivaldi loses some of his useless gallantry and paralyzing credulity; Emily discovers the correctness of her father's lectures on the pitfalls of sensibility. However, at the same time, the allure of the irrational, which delights in exploring and magnifying obscurity, is none the less real. The protagonists are eventually removed from the influence of the
irrational, but they are not forever released from it. The capacity of the imagination to choose and to create terror still exists after the gothic enemy seems vanquished. Both Radcliffe and her readers are required to compare the feebleness of the final reassurances with the internal reality of terror.

In Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), the study of the victims' mentality is intense, unrelieved by anything except the most fragile moments of nostalgia. The fictional events which, thanks to the Chinese-box-like structure of the narrative, stretch out in apparently infinite regression, are a continual source of pain and disillusionment. Despite the close attention to the psychology of extremity in *Melmoth*, which often reveals how fear and pain are self-made, obscurity and terror assume for Maturin an independent reality, beyond the reach of mere projection or masochistic invention. When the delights of sublimity are endless, they cease to be delightful and the complicity of the imagination becomes irrelevant. Drawn by the impressiveness of Maturin's objects of terror, the reader is sucked inward by the cycle of narrators, each of whom has less relief to promise. Maturin establishes a plausible, alternative gothic world of pain that is shared by persecutors and persecuted. The latter, perhaps, are vindicated in Heaven, but the novel holds out no firm evidence of that, speaking mainly of Hell.

In *Melmoth* obscurity and terror are institutionalized; they are the chief instruments of the unhappy tyrants and the conspiratorial tyrannies. This is a logical extension of previous gothic preoccupations. It is as if Maturin had decided to pursue to the farthest point the
isolated reference in Burke's *Enquiry* to the usefulness of sublimity in religion and politics. At that point aesthetic enjoyment—the cult of the sublime—passes away, and persecution begins, without relief for victim or vicarious sufferer.

The breadth of the vision makes *Melmoth* more menacing, disturbing and desolate than stories of gothic villainy based on monastic, criminal or national stereotypes—though many of those are invoked in *Melmoth* as well. Maturin restricts the number of rationalizations or evasions; as a result, his fantasies and excursions into history are less susceptible to nostalgic interpretation. What distinguishes *Melmoth* and gives it enduring value is the choice of settings, situations, and incidents from outside the usual gothic repertoire. In addition, many of its observations about the perversity of institutional authority are still pertinent, because the same institutional targets have survived.

Unless the principle of organization is found, Maturin's rummaging through history and geography seems tiresome, random and pointless. There is an extraordinary chronological range: from a roughly contemporary "present" the narrative reaches back to the time of the Wanderer's original pact, over four centuries earlier. The Wanderer's travels extend—in reverse order—from Ireland to England to Spain to Germany to the Indian Ocean—and those are only the encounters we are told about. Maturin abandons any real pretense of order or sequence. Articulation between levels of narration is often mechanical or haphazard. For example, Maturin relies on the worn-out device of the testimonial document, like St. Aubert's accidental "message" to Emily or the account that Adeline discovers, in order to introduce the crucial tale of the
accused madman Staunton. Similarly, in the middle of the anti-idyll on Immalee's island, Maturin interjects the gratuitous bit of information that the Wanderer is conducting his campaign against Staunton's soul in the intervals of his love-making with Immalee; except for reminding us of the Wanderer's true nature, a fact that is ironically overemphasized anyway, the coincidence is empty.

There is no accounting for such clumsiness except by noting that the actual unifying principle in Melmoth is psychological, and that the plot has to bend in some odd ways to accommodate it. What ties together the various levels of narration is a state of mind that Maturin fixes before our attention through repetition and reflection: it is the experience of utter alienation, the conviction that suffering, once prolonged past a certain personal limit, is a mark of damnation.

This experience occupies all of Melmoth's consciousness, and the shape of the narrative is determined by the Wanderer's desperate search for someone who will take over his burden. Lewis takes a man who is already cut off from the world and drives him deeper into it in order to present the spectacle of his damnation. Maturin, on the other hand, takes a man who has set himself adrift from the world—with the purpose, paradoxically, of enjoying it longer—and refuses to let him re-enter the world on his own terms. Melmoth can save himself (i.e., die in peace) only by luring someone else to the same damnation-through-immortality. Melmoth's singular, prolonged existence is the curse that he longs to transfer, its pain and loneliness the contagion that he sheds on those he comes into contact with. Like Ambrosio, he is trapped in a terrible, irreconcilable dilemma: his greatest desire is for human
contact, which his unnatural history, although it has allowed him a wide
view of life, has denied him; yet, he undertakes each contact with the
knowledge beforehand that he must turn diabolical agent in order to save
himself—that he must blight what he starts to love. The rule that
prevailed in The Monk prevails in Melmoth: the erotic impulse is ulti-
mately destructive.

Maturin traces the pattern of alienated souls who attract the great
outcast from the opening of Melmoth. The circumstances by which the
Wanderer again appears in the fictional world are especially significant.
The whole assemblage of stories is received by young John Melmoth, a
descendant of the Wanderer, from the shipwrecked Spaniard Monçada, one
of the Wanderer's chief victims. John Melmoth tries to save the Spaniard
from the tumultuous sea, but he is incapable and almost drowns, until
the Spaniard saves him. John Melmoth is unprepared to battle with the
chaotic, drowning element; he is rescued by a man who is particularly
well-equipped to bring him word from that element, however, for Monçada
has survived isolation, blind persecution, and irrational hatred.

Need, as well as accident, has brought the two young men together.
John Melmoth has arrived at the western Irish coast to await the death
of his wealthy uncle; he is an orphan whose only connection with his
uncle has been financial dependency—and the uncle is a mean provider.
Melmoth feels no pity at the old man's death. Indeed, emotional barren-
ness seems to be the family heritage, for the uncle has a reputation for
cruelty and coldness in the neighbourhood. John Melmoth is edging
towards the emotional condition that made possible his ancestor's fatal
bargain; Moncada is "sent" to warn him.
The tremendous catastrophe in which the Wanderer is consumed precludes our finding out whether John Melmoth has been moved or educated by the long recitation of Moncada, but the lesson is delivered with unremitting force. As narrative unfolds from narrative, the same elements are varied and compounded. The constant theme is the perversion and destruction of family relations. Staunton's family commits him to an insane asylum full of religious and political fanatics in order to seize his wealth. Moncada is consigned to a monastery which is a veritable dungeon by the fatuous, superstitious fears of his parents, fears encouraged by the ministers of the Church. More than any other gothic novelist Maturin succeeds in representing the Church as a model of the perfect, impenetrable, conspiratorial organization, and as a monstrous distortion of the natural family. The Church is the evil genius of power raised to magnificent yet terrible proportions; it acts out a parody of parental anxieties about the independence and erotic potency of children, and its answer to the anxieties is to capture and desexualize everyone. Its blighting influence descends on figures in the other narratives: on the Jewish magician Adonijah in the form of the Inquisition, on Isidora/Immalee through the agency of her pious, imbecile parents. Religion, as a kind of anti-erotic tyranny, also destroys the lives of the English lovers, who are plagued by sectarian differences and religious war.

The Wanderer, always hopeful for release, aggravates each miserable situation. Like the mysterious Armenian in Schiller's *Ghost-Seer* he keeps himself and his purposes deliberately obscure.
Yet Maturin will not permit us the luxury of simply detesting him. The divided attitudes characteristic of the ambivalent mode of gothicism show plainly in Maturin's treatment of the Wanderer, and in his general appreciation of suffering as a means of sensational stimulation.

It would have been relatively easy for Maturin to have made Melmoth some sort of gothic demon and to have elicited our total sympathy for the poor victims whom the Wanderer tries to tempt into changing places with him. Instead, Maturin renders the anguish of the Wanderer as real as that of the victims—perhaps more real, for the Wanderer is not given the chance to present his situation in sentimental terms, as the various narrators often do. Unlike the different story-tellers, whose information Monçada and John Melmoth are busy putting together, the Wanderer is aware of all the ironies of his position, but, though he does not suffer from the normal victim's paralysis and fear (equivalent to an exaggerated sublime response), he is unable to save himself.

It is natural, given his combined impotence and awareness, that he should respond with grisly humour and a teasing of his prey. That process becomes especially painful during his relationship with Immalee, whom he dares to love him, while warning her indirectly about the consequences, and cursing himself for the game he must play with her. Maturin goes to some length to disclaim any identification with Melmoth's blasphemies, yet his most forceful writing is devoted to an examination of Melmoth's sentiments and opinions, including his dark thoughts about human love and heavenly salvation. We learn rather little about Melmoth until Maturin allows him to meditate on the value of his existence.
The remainder of Maturin's considerable skill as a psychological observer goes into his description of the victims' mental conditions. The psychology of those who are placed in "extraordinary positions" becomes such a strong sustaining factor in *Melmoth* that the unending account of suffering seems necessary, if the narrative is not to dissolve in a mass of moralistic conclusions wrenched from its basic tone of unbelief.

Many of the images in *Melmoth* are exceedingly repulsive. There is, for example, the extended agony of Moncada's hopeless attempt to tunnel out of monastic captivity, a night-long crawl through cold and darkness, with a murderer for his guide. There is the midnight mock wedding ceremony that binds Isidora/Immalee to Melmoth, a ceremony presided over by the animated corpse of a monk.

Moreover, many of Maturin's fundamental interests have a questionable tendency. *Melmoth* is a misogynistic fiction, rich in details of the torture of women's minds, in particular. Maturin's extremely close scrutiny of the sufferer's mentality pushes sensationalism beyond the decorous range described by Burke and his critical successors, although his psychological experiments are, in fact, dedicated to the objectives that Burke laid out for the art of terror.

What is most uncomfortable about *Melmoth* as a work of ambivalent gothicism is that it provides the reader with relatively little protection, in the form of exoticism or assimilated nostalgic elements, and, in that sense, less ambivalence. Maturin brings before us most of the usual gothic stock of character types and incidents—the fiendish monks, the naive female victims, the subterranean adventures, the reversals and
confusions of identity, the blasted love affairs—yet all of these are merely instrumental in furthering his sensationalist purposes, none of them sufficiently convincing so as to explain away Maturin's vision of what the gothic world means. Maturin is unable to offer us any satisfactory means of distancing his objects of terror because they are not distant in his imagination, and because he wants to maintain their impressiveness and their capacity to demand our admiration. Melmoth, for example, must be made to suffer more magnificently than we think he deserves; his fate must be spectacular, not, in the end, contemptible. Maturin cannot demonstrate very convincingly that the fantasies he superimposes upon historical or foreign settings are simply matters of gothic barbarity, in a diminuitive sense. He cannot suggest that what he represents are the manners of the gothic ancestors who tortured their children and murdered each other out of passion, who ignored their inherent irrationality, yet succumbed to it. The system of power-through-terror that Maturin analyses in such minute detail is tangible, and Maturin refrains from attributing any response to that system to accidents of an alien time or place. The ambivalence of Maturin's gothic ism lies in this: he makes damnation real, psychologically if not theologically, yet he also makes the view of it, from the inside, spectacular and strangely attractive.

In this treatment of terrifying objects, Maturin's method depends on the typical ambivalent attitude towards the gothic. It remains now to examine the essential differences between gothic ambivalence and nostalgia as shown in the selected gothic novels that have been considered here.
FOOTNOTES


2. Identification of the gothic period as a time when individual power was excessive (i.e., the whiggish application of "goth" as an insult against tory authoritarianism) is strengthened by the inclusion of sexual rapacity among the gothic abuses.


4. W. F. Wright, however, denies the contention (found in the work of Alice Killen and Jacob Brauchli) that Mrs. Radcliffe’s attitude toward monasticism is purely anti-clerical, claiming instead that "the novelist's interest in the religious houses was that of a sentimental artist" (p. 107) and that the monastery was simply another exotic setting, so imperfectly known as to be highly adaptable. For a partisan critique of gothic anti-monasticism, see Sister Mary Muriel Tarr, *Catholicism in Gothic Fiction* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1946). Compare A. L. Barbault, "On Monastic Institutions," *Works*, II, 195-213.


8. Ibid., pp. 299-300.

9. Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Monk: A Romance*, ed. Howard Anderson (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973). Anderson follows the text of the manuscript version of *The Monk* in the collection of the Wisbech and Fenland Museum, a version which comes closer to the first published editions (1795, 1796) than to subsequent editions that Lewis was compelled to expurgate. Original orthography is preserved. All citations refer to this edition and will be given within the text.

10. For divergent views on Lewis' notoriety, see Mrs. Cornwall Baron-Wilson, *The Life and Correspondence of M. G. Lewis* (London: Henry Colburn, 1839) and Louis F. Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* (Cambridge,
Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1961). The general background given in Quinlan's *Victorian Prelude* and the detailed analysis of Lewis' legal harassment in Parreaux's study of the publication of *The Monk* indicate that the indecency or blasphemy of the novel was magnified by the author's announcement that he was a Member of Parliament.

11. The epigraph also ironically connects carnality and the inanimate:

---Lord Angelo is precise;
Stands at a guard with envy; Scarce confesses,
That his blood flows, or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone.

(*Measure for Measure*, I.iii.50-53)


14. Nevertheless, the desire to unmask Antonia in the preceding scene is here more than fulfilled, and it is Lorenzo's dream-imagination that divests her of her bridal gown. Earlier, in his argument with Christo¬bal, Lorenzo inadvertently names the latent alternative to his super¬ficial decency, when he declares: "I should be a Villain, could I think of her on any other terms than marriage!" (p. 85).

15. Berryman complains: "I have scarcely ever read an excellent novel which for so long fails to declare its quality. Up to the sixth chapter, or halfway through the book, it is charming and interesting in varying degrees, eminently readable, but hardly remarkable" (p. 130).

16. The same kind of warning against sexual dangers, and particularly against deceptive lovers, occurs in the song which Raymond's spy, Theodore, uses to try to tell Agnes of his presence in the convent, "The Water-King: a Danish Ballad." The element of the Water-King is the fluid of sexual experience, and the gradual immersion of the song's female victim represents a dangerous initiation. The song is perfectly suited to Agnes' situation, for it warns in a refrain: "Believe not every handsome Knight" (p. 291).

17. Evans, pp. 56-59.

18. Tarr lists these solecisms at great length and seems to regard them as a sufficiently damning comment on gothic techniques; Berryman notes some of them too (p. 133), but does not consider them major flaws.

p. 28. The phrase "undecided character" is from B.-W.'s biography of Lewis.


22 Lewis appears to share this fascination; he is especially meticulous in detailing Ambrosio's "captivation" by Matilda and in presenting Antonia at her bath, not only to Ambrosio but to the reader. The playful adventure of the pet linnet at Antonia's breasts is a sight too much for the monk to bear, and Lewis makes the mixture of coyness and sexual ripeness extremely attractive.

23 "Had his Penitents consulted those Interpreters": see John Graham, "Character Description and Meaning in the Romantic Novel," Studies in Romanticism, 5, 4 (1966), 208-218, for a discussion of physiognomic practices in the novel and their supposed value. This deception has a more sinister reflection in Antonia's cry "Oh! I was not deceived in him" which precedes another rape attempt (p. 250). Ironically, Ambrosio's chief access to Antonia--his holiness--sets him apart from far easier and safer prey.

24 Vincentio della Ronda: This fictitious ill friend supplies the pretext for Rosario/Matilda to visit Ambrosio in his cell.

25 Nelson asserts that "The Monk, with other novels of the school, presented under the license of sensationalism significant and basic traits of human nature that elsewhere, in 'polite' fiction, went unexpressed" (p. 242). Nelson notes that the apparent sensationalism (or pornography) is the means by which "the gothic novel seems to have freed the minds of readers from direct involvement of their superegos and allowed them to pursue daydreams and wish fulfilment in regions where inhibitions and guilt could be suspended" (p. 238). Compare Railo, Haunted Castle, p. 280.

26 Levy argues that the principal difference between the novels of Radcliffe and The Monk is that in the former the protagonists are able to emerge from their vision of hell, to regain a level of relative consciousness and rationality, to explain away what has happened to them; for the protagonists of Lewis or Maturin, "le rêveur est allé si profond qu'il ne peut plus remonter" (p. 640).

28. Radcliffe pretends to assign each novel a specific historical setting; in *The Romance of the Forest*, for example, she adopts an elaborate and irrelevant editorial device in order to suggest that the fiction is based on plausible fact derived from documentary sources. Such efforts have little effect on the actual conduct of the novels, nor do Radcliffe's historical interests produce more than superficial knowledge of other times and places.

29. *Udolpho*, pp. 662-663. The deception continued to prey on the gullible. In Chapter 6 of *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Morland, reading *Udolpho* for the first time, exclaims to her new friend Miss Thorpe, a more experienced reader of the gothic: "Oh! the dreadful black veil! My dear Isabella, I am sure there must be Laurentina's skeleton behind it" (Penguin edn., 1972, p. 62).

30. Schedoni rather contemptuously explains to Vivaldi how he has relied on the young man's superstitious fear in his schemes to keep Vivaldi away from Ellena (Italian, p. 397).

31. La Motte "knew himself to be in the power of the Marquis, and he dreaded that power more than the sure, though distant punishment that awaits upon guilt" (*Romance of the Forest*, p. 247).

32. Ibid., p. 49.

33. In Chapter 23 of *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine cannot quite accept General Tilney's explanation for his wakefulness while she goes to bed—that he has many political pamphlets to read. Her own ideas are typically gothic: "There must be some deeper cause: something was to be done which could be done only while the household slept; and the probability that Mrs. Tilney yet lived, shut up for causes unknown, and receiving from the pitiless hands of her husband a nightly supply of coarse food, was the conclusion which necessarily followed" (p. 191). The fantasy is lifted directly from *The Sicilian Romance*.

34. Tompkins, p. 84 ff., pp. 147-148.

35. The coyness of Radcliffe's technique is a direct product of ambivalent attitudes. During most of *The Romance of the Forest* Radcliffe suggests a measure of incestuous, aggressive intent in the succession of false fathers, and the suggestion is made explicit when the Marquis de Montalt is identified as Adeline's real father. Radcliffe leaves the puzzle of his motives unsolved only long enough to impress Adeline—and the reader—with the pain of mistaken connection; when Adeline's distress has been sufficiently aggravated, she retracts the threatening information.


37 The Abate who pretends to aid Ellena and Vivaldi speaks of the young man's heroic pretensions as an anachronism: "'You are a knight of chivalry, who would go about the earth fighting with every body by way of proving your right to do good; it is unfortunate that you are born somewhat too late'" (Italian, p. 122).

38 There have been frequent, usually unsupported claims that Radcliffe wrote The Italian in outrage against the excesses of The Monk. Tompkins, for example, argues that The Italian was an "attempt to redeem the subject of monastic tyranny, and to treat it in a manner that should be quite terrible and yet consistent with perfect delicacy. In The Italian there is no lust and no luxurious cruelty; in place of them there is bigotry and ambition" (p. 278). This last contrast is particularly inaccurate.

39 Radcliffe, The Italian, p. 64.

40 Ibid., p. 65.

41 Ibid., p. 68.

42 Ellena's imagination, as she watches one of the nuns, makes this transformation explicit: she sees "the countenance of the nun characterised by gloomy malignity, which seemed ready to inflict upon others some portion of the unhappiness she herself suffered. As she glided forward with soundless steps, her white drapery, floating along these solemn avenues, and her hollow features touched with the mingled light and shadow which the partial rays of a taper she held occasioned, she seemed like a spectre newly risen from the grave, rather than a living being" (Italian, pp. 66-67).

43 For a comparison of the monastic recluse and the noble hermit, see Tompkins, p. 286.


45 Schedoni, Ellena and the peasant guide enter a village where Carnival is being celebrated. Part of the festivities is a performance of John Webster's Appius and Virginia. Schedoni is disturbed by two remarks from the guide. First he delights in the skill of a juggler who "has turned a monk into a devil already, in the twinkling of an eye." At the climax of the dramatic performance, the guide exclaims, as if in accusation against Schedoni's contemplated deed: "'Look! Signor, see! Signor, what a scoundrel! What a villain! See! he has murdered his own daughter!'" (p. 274).

46 Ibid., p. 58.


As Burke's theory would predict, Melmoth's intermittent appearances and the obscurity of his purposes increase his impressiveness and the terror associated with him. A good deal of the reader's tension originates in the expectation that he will intervene in the succeeding episodes and in the uncertainty of how he will do so.

Mario Praz, *Romantic Agony*, pp. 116-120.

CONCLUSION

This study began by considering various images of the gothic, arising from historical fact and folk tradition, and by assessing their potential usefulness for the creative imagination and popular art. Through examples drawn from critical theory and selected gothic fiction, it has shown that, once the imaginative value of the gothic had been recognized, there were two possible attitudes towards it, each supporting a radically different kind of gothic fiction.

The nostalgic attitude, first expressed through the work of antiquaries, such as Hurd, Warton and Percy, and poetic revivers of folklore, such as Gray, Macpherson and Chatterton, transformed the essential barbarity and crudeness of the gothic world into a vision of a more primitive, simple existence, elevated by ceremony and dignity, purified of the most disturbing effects of modern life. The imaginary era embodied the ideals that the present age had failed to preserve. As the shortcomings of sophistication and "improvement" became increasingly evident, it was natural that this selective perception of the past should have become more appealing and convenient. For both conservative and radical reformers of the nineteenth century, like Carlyle and Ruskin, identification with the gothic ancestors exemplified an heroic resistance to the encroachments of modernity.

We have seen the adaptability of the nostalgic attitude to conservative, pietistic ends in Clara Reeve's *Old English Baron* (1777). Her dedication, in fiction and theory, to bourgeois moralism, and her
opposition to revolutionary ideas produced a relatively bland, rationalistic, reassuring sort of gothic story, in which dissatisfactions with the existing order, particularly with changes in family life, were redressed through the power of nostalgic idealization. For Reeve, as for other nostalgic gothicists, the gothic world ultimately offered a refuge from violence and revolution. For some it also lifted the banality of everyday life.

We can derive a sense of the nostalgic attitude from works that are not simply, exclusively nostalgic, as The Old English Baron, The Recess (1785), or Longsword (1762) undoubtedly are. Though her outlook is less tinged with middle-class aspirations than Reeve's, a degree of nostalgia affects Ann Radcliffe's fiction. There are, after all, the scenic and emotional idylls which her early readers enjoyed so much: at La Vallée and in the Alps (Udolpho, 1794), at the convent of Santa della Pieta (Italian, 1797), in La Luc's pastoral cottage (Romance of the Forest, 1791). The pleasures of sentiment and sensibility associated with a nostalgic version of the gothic are a constant source of delight for protagonist and reader.

In many gothic novels there is a rejection of certain aspects of modernity that has a nostalgic overtone. In Udolpho, for example, St. Aubert warns repeatedly against the empty temptations of city life. His wisdom is corroborated by the attractiveness of the rural alternative, by the nearly ruinous career of Valancourt in Paris, and by Emily's own experience with Venetian luxury and degeneracy.

Occasionally a similar criticism of modernity forms a part of gothic ambivalence, but the criticism has no nostalgic effect, since no
positive alternative to modern life is presented or intended. A prime example occurs in The Monk (1795) where Lewis exhibits a delight in emphasizing the inadequacy of rationalism and skepticism when confronted by objects of ancient, primitive belief or by irrational forces. Having conjured her up as a trick, Raymond almost succumbs to the Bleeding Nun. Lorenzo, Antonia and Elvira all ignore the promptings of their ominous dreams until it is too late. The obtuseness of these characters represents, in extreme form, the enlightened reader's weakness of imagination: like them he supposes himself above superstition, only to discover the disastrous consequences of complacency. The failure of rationalism shows most clearly in Ambrosio, whose strict external discipline can neither aid nor control the internal, demonic chaos.

The fully nostalgic attitude pushes the critique of rationalism one step further, and makes the gothic openness to the irrational, spiritual and supernatural a point of superiority. This judgment is interwoven in critical defences of the gothic from Hurd's "fine fabling" through Drake's "sportive gothic." For antiquaries, poets, novelists and builders, expansiveness is the imaginative reward of the gothic taste, but the nostalgic treatment usually selects outlets for it which are not threatening or sensational.

In its architectural and social manifestations, the nostalgic attitude advocates a return to more splendid forms of religious ritual, design, and social order, such as are supplied by Roman Catholicism, gothic styles, chivalric manners, and gothic libertarianism. However, there is also a strong nostalgic component in the central psychological interest of many gothic novels—the problem of identity and authority.
The working out of the problem invariably requires a fulfilment obtained from the past, which is the result of a more complete awareness of the past.

It is the perfect parent, and hence the perfect childhood, that the protagonist-victim in gothic fiction wants to recover. Adeline in Romance of the Forest and Ellena in The Italian are mystified and frustrated by their uncertain parentage; their eventual happiness depends on their histories being set straight. In Udolpho Emily is distracted by the question of her father's faithfulness and her own origins. Parallel anxieties about lineage and parental sexual conduct appear in overtly nostalgic works (viz. Edmund's vigil and his parents' ghostly assistance in Old English Baron), and in works which are not nostalgic. In The Monk, for example, personal histories play a very important part in the whole ironic pattern, exacting a terrible price from those who are ignorant of them. The discovery of the past brings no satisfaction to Ambrosio, only greater agony.

The pathos and tension inherent in the search for origins registers on a personal level, of course, but it also has a wider social significance. The quest for authentic, protective, sexually neutral parents draws the protagonist further and further into an archaic region whose features are compounded from equal parts of personal anxiety, fantasy, and cultural history. Under the guise of domestic adventure and conflict (i.e., the solving of family mysteries), the gothic novelists often pursued a collective, nostalgic desire for a more protective, more secure, less violent reality, a goal which could only be reached by penetrating a labyrinth of dangers and threats—by breaching the
chambers of Udolpho, by exposing Schedoni's machinations—or by purging the danger from the gothic world altogether, as Clara Reeve tried to do.

The dangers are all the more treacherous because they are attractive and impressive—like Montoni's arrogance and sexual potency, or Manfred's defiance of certain doom in The Castle of Otranto (1764). The nostalgic attitude locates the essence of the gothic safely beyond the ring of dangers, and it is not much interested in them. For ambivalent gothicists the reverse is true.

The ambivalent gothicists remained skeptical about the actual superiority of gothic manners, because they endowed the gothic with a different set of characteristics. They accepted, and exploited in their art, much of the received wisdom about the gothic world, cultivating the image of it as a realm of barbarity, violence, superstition, tyranny, and sexual aggression. The excitement and terror generated by Otranto, The Monk, The Italian, or Melmoth (1820) drew support from the belief that such features were truly gothic.

For the ambivalent gothicists, the superiority of the gothic lay not in its receptivity to imposed social, political or religious ideals, but in its unlimited imaginative potency, its value as a place where sensational, extraordinary subjects might be examined intensively, where unusual forms and techniques might be adopted freely. The cues which key gothic objects—such as castles, convents, hermits, monks, nuns, or outlaws—gave the reader established immediate, predictable responses which, in turn, provided the gothic novelist or builder with a great deal of creative leeway. Builders could rely on such responses because the imaginary effect of neo-gothic buildings arose from literary
associations of the same kind. When Lewis raised the old spectre of monasticism, or Radcliffe that of the Inquisition, when Walpole wrote in amusement of tyrant kings and eligible daughters, the reader knew what degree of violence and licence to expect. Once the basic premise of gothic barbarity was acknowledged, the ambivalent gothicist was able to explore psychic territory and to evoke sensational responses which were otherwise forbidden, under the protection of his persistent ambivalence towards the entertaining, terrifying, strange objects themselves: Walpole's contempt for Manfred and sympathy for his sexual dilemma, Lewis' diminishment of Ambrosio and identification with him.

To different degrees the gothic novelists followed a process of compromise with established tastes that was a direct function of their ambivalence towards the gothic itself. This was the same process that Walpole, Miller and Knight brought to neo-gothic building.\(^3\) This was a means of ensuring the reader's comfort by proving that the gothic was, at the same time, alien, exotic, dangerous, and controllable. It was also a means of excusing the reader's fascination with the terrifying experiences that he had eagerly sought out. Each ambivalent gothicist found some method of making the fiction open to ambivalent readings: editorial devices (Walpole, Radcliffe, even Clara Reeve), narrative tone (Walpole, Lewis), narrative commentary (Lewis, Radcliffe, Maturin), superficial moralism (Radcliffe). We have already noticed, however, in the discussion of *The Monk* and *Melmoth the Wanderer*, how the reassuring aspect of the ambivalent attitude gradually faded and became less convincing, less necessary, as gothic barbarity, violence, eroticism, and sensationalism assumed a positive value and a compulsive attractiveness.
of their own.

My aim in distinguishing between the two attitudes towards the
gothic has not been to devise yet another system for categorizing the
gothic novel. I believe that an understanding of these attitudes helps
to reveal the complex mixture of historical, dramatic, political, and
psychological elements that entered into the composition of gothic fic­tion. The tension between nostalgic and ambivalent attitudes has
enabled some account to be given of many features of tone, structure,
and characterization which are so unusual that they tempt one to dismiss
gothic fiction as merely chaotic or technically incompetent.

More important, a realization of the various impulses behind the
gothic taste evinced in the novels studied makes clearer its connection
with later cultural developments: the growth of Anglo-Catholicism and
High Anglicanism, the rise of the historical novel, the revived interest
in medieval institutions as social and political models, and the contro­
versy over the proper style for the Victorian English city. The gothic
novels do not contain, of course, coherent explanations of such phenomena,
but they do offer a vivid impression of the sensibility which gave birth
to them.
FOOTNOTES

1 See, for example, John Ruskin, The Nature of Gothic, with preface by William Morris (London: George Allen, 1899).

2 For various opinions on the relationship between real violence and revolution (i.e., the French Revolution) and the gothic novel, see Parreaux, p. 36 ff. Parreaux cites Sade's essay on the gothic in Idées sur les Romans, in which Sade argues that the violence of contemporary life forced the gothic novelists to outdo reality.

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- 264 -


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